LITERACY
IN ANCIENT SPARTA

BY

TERRENCE A. BORING

LUGDUNI BATAVORUM E. J. BRILL MCMLXXIX

LITERACY
IN ANCIENT SPARTA

ISBN 90 04 05971 7

Copyright 1979 by E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or translated in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, microfiche or any other means without written permission from the publisher

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

Λάκων ὁ τέττιξ εὔτικος εἰς χορόν (Pratinas)
The Spartan, that cicada! ready for the dance.

. . . ῶν Λακεδαιμόνιοι πλέον ἀπέχουσι τῶν Βαρβάρων (Isocrates)
More ignorant than the barbarians.

CONTENTS

Preface ix
Acknowledgments xiii

I. Preliminary Problems and Definitions 1
1. Literacy 1
2. The Evidence by Categories 3
3. Literary Evidence 3
4. Epigraphical Evidence 5
5. Public Documents 6
6. Private Votive Offerings 8

II. Archaic Sparta 17
1. Early Records 19
2. Preliminary Conclusions and Summary 23
3. Written Laws in Sparta 24
4. Public Archives 31
5. Inscribed Documents set up for Public Display 33
6. Personal and Official Correspondence 36
7. The Ownership of Books in Sparta 41
8. Anecdotes 47

III. Minor Writers who were Lacedaemonians 50

IV. Foreign Writers who went to Sparta 64

V. Public and Private Documents of the Fourth Century and Later 74

VI. Sparta in the Second Century B.C. and Later 81

VII. The Extent of the Later Spartan Records 88

Summary and Conclusions 94

Appendix. A Select Catalogue of Inscriptions Late Seventh Through Fifth Century B.C. 98

Index to Inscriptions Listed in Catalogue 113

PREFACE

The question of whether or not the Spartans could read and write may seem a curious one, but I am not the first to ask it. Indeed I have any number of predecessors both ancient and modern.

Ancient writers were fond of asking questions about Sparta which they might not ask about other small towns. Statements about the Spartans were not always accurate or harmonious; and so, we have the examples of Pindar who praised the city as the home of the Muses, of Isocrates who condemned them as more backward than the Barbarians, and of the anonymous Δίσσοι Λόγοι which claimed that they were proud to be ignorant of both music and letters.

Few, if any, ancient writers bothered to tell us that the people of Phleius, Sicyon, Argos, or any number of other small towns were or were not illiterate; no one was interested.

Even the more important towns such as Thebes and Corinth did not attract the same attention. Thebes could produce one Pindar, but who else? Chaeroneia could produce one Plutarch but who else? Cicero was unable to think of a single orator from Corinth (*Brutus* 13.50). But Sparta was different; everything there had to have a reason—even things which would have been considered normal or not worth talking about elsewhere. For example, many later writers came from miles around to see and write about such details as what the Spartans ate and even how they ate it—(they gulped it down: κάπτουσι τὰ ψαιστά). Visitors were impressed by its wealth of traditions, its documents and customs. They were astonished at the lack of writers or written law codes. The absence of them in Sparta must have seemed very profound. Naturally enough they talked about it a good deal and, since the Spartans were the subject of the talk, it was often idealized. They did not use written laws because Lycurgus had forbidden them. It was a virtue there for youth to wear a single garment for an entire year. Likewise, stealing was alleged to have been a virtue for boys, while productive labor was an unthinkable disgrace for men. Illiteracy too was made into a near virtue by some foreign writers, and yet few, if any, of the other Greek towns were better off in this respect. Indeed if asked to write a monograph about literacy

in almost any of the other cities (with the exception of Athens), I think that it would have proved impossible.

In the pages which follow, especially in chapter one, much has been made of definitions since it seemed important for the reader to know exactly what I mean by the word "literacy." Sometimes it is quite possible for different writers to use such a word in very different ways.

When I first settled upon my extremely basic definition, I feared that my expectations, even for the Spartans, were far too low; I should aim higher if I wanted to call them literate.

Since then I have noted, without pleasure, more than one leading article and editorial in the newspapers of the United States which suggest that my expectations for the Spartans, far from being too low for the sixth or fifth centuries B.C., are not too far out of date for our own time. Now, we are told, candidates for graduation from high schools in certain large cities must prove their ability to read names in telephone books, street signs, and certain kinds of advertising. Educational experts often refer to this ability as "functional literacy" or, more recently, as "survival skills," and it is sometimes considered to be a reasonable goal for the modern school. Indeed one high school administrator, referring to a newly instituted test designed to insure such skills, was recently quoted as saying "I hope this will help answer the people who say a high school diploma doesn't mean anything anymore." I have considered a Spartan literate if he was able to scratch his name onto a pot as a votive offering. But perhaps, after all, he was not so far behind what the Washington Post described as "phone-book literacy."

Literacy has always been an interesting and important subject, though its importance varies greatly from one age to another and within and between different societies. Some cultures have thrived without it; others have failed in spite of its benefits.

This small monograph is intended to explore the use of writing in one ancient town which was often declared illiterate by its neighbors. To this end I have employed many types of evidence from the ancient sources and have tried to draw the most reasonable deductions.

In general I have tried to arrange the subject matter in a chronological sequence. But some over-lapping, and in a few cases, repetition, has been unavoidable because of the necessity of treating things also by categories. For example, writers known from Sparta

are put together under one subject heading, but sometimes things written by those authors, often referring to a much earlier age, may also appear elsewhere.

References to inscriptions have two forms; those published in *IG* V 1 are so identified since this seemed easier for the reader; but others published elsewhere, are referred to by the numbers appearing in the list of inscriptions in the appendix. This is done to avoid cumbersome references in the text. Full identification is given in the list of inscriptions. Some inscriptions, especially the inscribed sherds, are illustrated with photographs; these are indicated by the sign *.

English translations have been given for passages quoted from the Greek. Apparent exceptions to this rule are shorter passages which have been summarized or paraphrased in the text. It was felt that additional translation would not benefit the reader and would be needlessly repetitious.

American School of Classical Studies at Athens
1977

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A debt of gratitude is owed to many for much help. First of all to S. Dow who originally suggested that I find out if the Spartans could read and write. He has also given a good deal of help with the actual work as well as the greatest possible encouragement. E. Vanderpool has offered much help by way of many discussions about literacy and inscriptions; he also provided me with some very important bibliographical material which I would otherwise have missed. R. Lenardon has given me a great deal of help with the original drafts of the work; he was always ready to read one more version and to offer suggestions for its improvement.

G. Steinhauer, director of the Sparta Museum, was most helpful whenever I needed to make use of the inscriptions or the inscribed sherds which have been out of sight for so many years.

I also owe thanks to scholars who have helped by reading earlier drafts, especially M. Hartwell, J. Adams and L. Threatte.

Special gratitude is due to the American Council of Learned Societies whose generosity made possible most of my work with the inscriptions and inscribed sherds.

For errors and failures of interpretation, I take responsibility. These may indeed appear since the materials used are far ranging.

CHAPTER ONE

PRELIMINARY PROBLEMS AND DEFINITIONS

1. *Literacy*

Since the scope of this monograph is intended to include the use of writing in Sparta from the earliest times through the second century A.D., and since the requirements of the Spartans in respect to literacy varied according to social status and date, it was felt that a very broad definition of "literacy" must be admitted. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I have defined literacy as the ability of an individual to make any use of writing as a tool for the satisfaction of normal social, business, or political requirements, however great or small. For some Spartans this meant the ability to write a name; for others, a book or even many books. In general, it is assumed that the ability to write implied an ability to read, though it is recognized that this was not always the case.

Some will not accept this extremely broad definition of "literacy." Writing in a much more philosophical and psychological vein, E. A. Havelock [1] has already rejected the idea that the Athenian practice of ostracism "presupposes that the electorate was largely literate," an opinion recently expressed by E. Vanderpool [2] and said by Havelock to represent the *communis opinio.* The most Havelock will allow is that the ability to write names might indicate a semi-literate society. By "semi-literate" he seems to mean a society in which some and perhaps even many people can, if necessary, read or write simple materials such as names or short phrases at the most. In such a society it would not be expected that many or any would or could read or write anything which might be called literary in any sense. For Havelock, a truly literate society is one in which substantial numbers of citizens habitually read literary materials. This does not mean, of course, that every member must be literate; the distinction is dependent more on what is being read than on the exact numbers of readers.

---

[1] E. A. Havelock, *Prologue to Greek Literacy,* Semple Lectures (1971), University of Cincinnati, preliminary publication, p. 14.

[2] E. Vanderpool, *Ostracism at Athens,* Semple Lectures (1969), University of Cincinnati, preliminary publication, p. 15.

And so, in Havelock's judgement, a truly literate society appeared only with the development of literary prose as the major vehicle of communication. This began with Herodotus, who "occupies a position poised midway between complete non-literacy and complete literacy."

There is also a middle position which was recognized even in Antiquity. In an excellent article on the problems of ancient town clerks in Egypt, H. C. Youtie [3] showed that many individuals who held such positions could do little more than sign their own names and perhaps copy out some set formula at the end of a document. At least one of these clerks (and almost certainly others elsewhere), Petaus of Ptolmais Hormou (*fin. ii p.*), could not even read what he himself had written, as Youtie demonstrated in an analysis of his repeated errors. Petaus had memorized a mistake, practiced it faithfully, and for all anyone knows, he may have carried it to his grave. Certainly he could not read enough to correct it. But Petaus probably would have been deeply offended if told that he was illiterate. When a fellow town clerk (κωμογραμματεύς), Ischyrion of Tamais, was accused of being illiterate, Petaus replied that the charges were false, since Ischyrion signed all papers coming before him. Others concealed what we would call functional illiteracy by describing themselves as slow writers (βραδέως γράφων). On a higher level, Justinian (*s. vi p.*) made a distinction between the illiterate (ἀγράμματος) and the semiliterate (ὀλιγογράμματος). But recognizing their limitations, he required that both classes have their business conducted in the presence of five witnesses.

Petaus, Ischyrion, and doubtless others like them, probably were able to maintain their self-respect and their official positions, which depended upon their "literacy." But since, after the passage of so many centuries, it seems hardly just or necessary to defame the memory of Petaus and his peers by pronouncing them illiterate, from the point of view of a modern culture, I have deemed it advisable to accept the broadest possible definition of "literacy" and to place the emphasis of this study more on the actual use of writing made by the Spartans, than on the more philosophical aspects of what constitutes a literate society.

---

[3] H. C. Youtie, "Βραδέως Γράφων; Between Literacy and Illiteracy," *GRBS* 12 (1971), no. 2, pp. 239-261. See also E. G. Turner, *The Papyrologist at Work, GRBS* Monographs no. 6 (1973).

2. *The Evidence by Categories*

The evidence for this study falls logically into three general categories.

I. The literary evidence
  A. Written laws
  B. Personal and official correspondence
  C. Private ownership of books and treatises
  D. Anecdotes
  E. Minor writers who were Lacedaemonians
  F. Foreign writers who went to Sparta
II. The epigraphical evidence
  A. Inscriptions on stone
  B. Inscribed votive offerings on pottery and other materials
III. The later Spartan bureaucracy and public records

Each class of evidence presents its own problems of interpretation. Some of the chief problems of the literary evidence are 1) the relative scarcity of materials from the earlier centuries, 2) the cultural bias of fifth and fourth century Athenian writers who may appear to have regarded the Spartans as totally illiterate, and 3) the great distance separating later writers such as Plutarch from the pre-Roman Spartans.

3. *Literary Evidence*

The earlier testimony concerning literacy in Sparta is understandably sparse; whether or not the Spartans could write and read was, after all, not a question that was asked very often in sophisticated Athens. And yet we might now ask, What would the average reader of well known fifth and fourth century writers reply to such a question? In a recent article, F. D. Harvey concluded that "our fifth and fourth century sources are unanimous in declaring that the Spartans could not read or write." [4] This might be a typical response, and doubtless it was a part of the ancient myth and legend surrounding the city. In the end, Harvey, relying on "the evidence of probability, common sense and Plutarch," modified this extreme view.[5]

But did the fifth and fourth century sources really make such a

[4] F. D. Harvey, "Literacy in the Athenian Democracy," *Rev. Et. Grec.*, 79 (1967), p. 624.
[5] Harvey, *op. cit.* p. 624.

declaration? Perhaps not, since their comments cannot always be interpreted with literal simplicity. But evaluation of this material is difficult and allowance must be made for overall context, irony, and possibly even sheer fabrication on the part of the author. For example, was Isocrates reporting an actual fact when he said that some Spartans had copies of his speeches? Or did he simply invent the story to illustrate a point? In this case we can only assume that the basic statement is true (since we have no other evidence regarding these books in Sparta). But when Isocrates went on to say that the Spartans needed someone to read the speeches to them, we must be careful of his meaning; wrong inferences come easily.

The distance between the late writers and the early Spartans was more than chronological; it was also cultural, and Plutarch, a learned man in a literate society, does not seem to have taken much notice of the pre-literate or semi-literate stage of Greek culture. The world of Plutarch was one with complex bureaucracies and extensive collections of public records, private collections of books, and large public libraries. Literacy might well be taken for granted, at least among the upper classes. The written word was the norm; and even epic poetry, the ancient art of the poet-singer, was now (and had been for centuries) the art of the poet-writer.

But how different was the world of sixth and fifth century Sparta! The time was only one to two and a half centuries after the introduction of the alphabet into Greece, a fact emphasized by Plutarch's account of King Agesilaus searching the home of a Spartan general in quest of a copy of an important treaty (apparently the only written copy in Sparta). We must not be surprised if Plutarch and other late writers sometimes appear to have been unaware of the great chronological and cultural remoteness of their subject, and if they occasionally portrayed the Spartans as Ptolemaic scribes surrounded by hoards of books and records. For example, we have the stories in Plutarch about early Spartan mothers writing personal letters to their soldier-sons as if it were a routine practice. We also learn that Lycurgus prohibited the use of written laws in Sparta (including his own), even though this could scarcely have been a problem at any of the early dates generally associated with this shadowy figure.[6] In short, Plutarch's

[6] A. J. Toynbee, *Some Problems of Greek History* (Oxford 1967), pp. 266ff. has a good discussion of Lycurgus as god as well as perceptive comments

chronological perspective was defective and this fault resulted in a telescoping of history throughout his works.

Worse still is the problem of source materials. When using Plutarch's testimony as evidence, it is of the utmost importance to know his sources. Unfortunately this is not often possible, and Plutarch himself sometimes recognized the problem (*infra* p. 26). Nevertheless, his testimony is vital and I have used it extensively, but with regard for the problems inherent in such a large miscellany.

4. *Epigraphical Evidence*

An epigraphically minded visitor to fifth century Athens would, naturally enough, have been struck by many sights and new experiences. High on his list of memorable sights must have been the vast number of public and private inscriptions of all kinds. Throughout the Agora he could have seen any number of decrees, lists of city officials, religious inscriptions, and similar documents. Passing by the public buildings on the west side, he might have stopped in front of the statues of the tribal heroes to marvel at the legal proposals and notices posted there on wooden tablets prior to meetings of the assembly. On the acropolis itself, he would have seen the assessment lists carved on tall marble stelae in the finest stoichedon lettering. Elsewhere on the Acropolis, in the Agora, and all over Athens, he could have seen innumerable votive stelae and other inscriptions. If he was curious and timely enough, he might even have seen the large number of ostraca being dumped, one day, down the well on the north slope of the Acropolis, all inscribed with the name of Themistocles.

All of this would have made a keen impression on any observant traveller, and upon completion of his tour, he might well have concluded that Greece was indeed an "epigraphical civilization"— perhaps that it was a literate one as well. As S. Dow said, "Demos likes to read what Demos has done." [7]

But Athens, for all its brilliance, was only one city among many, and it may be that the same traveller would have been impressed in quite a different way by other cities. Since, according to proverbial wisdom of the Greeks, the voyage to Corinth was not for every man

---

about the rhetra; see also pp. 414ff. For a general summary of other scholarly opinions on Lycurgus, see P. Oliva, *Sparta and Her Social Problems* (Amsterdam 1971), pp. 63ff.

[7] S. Dow, "Corinthiaca," *HSCPh.* 53 (1942), p. 119.

(οὐ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς εἰς Κόρινθον ἐσθ' ὁ πλοῦς), and certainly not for the epigraphical man, we might suppose this imaginary visitor to have proceeded directly to Sparta. Based on the evidence of ancient remains, we can be sure of only three public inscriptions that he might have seen there, and we can affirm the existence of a few more from literary sources, perhaps a half-dozen all together. In addition, there were some private inscriptions; but on the whole, their paucity is the impressive thing. What does this mean for the question of literacy in Athens or Sparta?

The epigraphical evidence for literacy in Sparta, although more abundant than the literary, is somewhat more difficult to evaluate. Harvey found this to be true in the case of Athens,[8] where it is always tempting to equate large numbers of inscriptions with widespread literacy. On the other hand, illiteracy has sometimes been offered as an explanation of the very small number of inscriptions from Corinth (there are barely one hundred from the Greek period before 146 B.C.). The difficulty, as Harvey showed, is that we cannot be certain that the inscriptions were meant to be read by the general public; one could argue that illiterate persons habitually asked other people to read inscriptions or other public notices for them.

5. *Public Documents*

In Sparta, the public documents are less of a problem because they are so few in number, and nearly all are of a comparatively late date. They fall into two very broad classes: decrees passed by the Spartans and set up either in Sparta or elsewhere, and decrees passed elsewhere and set up in Sparta. Of the decrees passed elsewhere, there are only twenty-seven in all; seventeen are honorary, and date from the second century B.C. or later, nine are epistolary, from the late third through the second century B.C., and one is a fragment of a treaty dating from the third century. Of the decrees passed by Sparta, one is a fragment of a treaty with certain Aetolians made in the last part of the fifth century B.C.; two [9] are lists of contributions for the Peloponnesian war; six are honorary, dating

---

[8] Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 600.

[9] L. Jeffery, *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961), p. 197, reported that a previously obscure fragment of an inscription (*IG* V 1, 219) was really a part of the war contributions list (*IG* V 1, 1). Actually it was a separate list; see appendix, no. 98.

from the second or first century B.C.; one is a financial document of perhaps the first century B.C.; and one concerns regulations for the Leonidea and is from the first century B.C.

If the abundance of public documents set up in Athens suggests a high rate of literacy there, it may follow that the paucity of such documents in Sparta suggests the opposite. Only four or five Spartan documents are earlier than the third century, and evidently one of those was not even set up in Sparta. Even in the somewhat more open and cosmopolitan world of the mid-second century and later, the number of surviving decrees is very small and if they supply any evidence at all, it is largely negative.

Thus the problem for Sparta is simplified as compared with Athens. Harvey's concern was with interpretation of Athenian motives for setting up such large numbers of public inscriptions. But the questions he raised concerning the relationship between literacy and numbers of inscriptions in Athens are almost meaningless for Sparta. For the Spartans, state business was not necessarily public business, and there is little reason to think that the average citizen had a great need to keep up on current affairs by means of public notices. We must beware, however, of interpreting the small number of such inscriptions in Sparta as strong evidence of the general prevalence of illiteracy. A more likely explanation can be seen in the traditional secrecy and virtual isolation of the Spartans after the mid-sixth century. Moreover, it was not an early Spartan custom to grant lavishly worded honors for public benefactors; instead, a general silence existed concerning the deeds of local citizens and foreigners alike.[10] This attitude changed only with the passage of time and with new interstate relations. That grants of such honors by the Spartans were not frequent, is shown clearly enough by the fact that no Spartan proxeny decree earlier than the second century B.C. exists.[11] M. Tod suggested that *IG* V 1, 4 (*s. ii a.*) was one of the first to be granted by the Spartans, and that the clumsy language indicates a lack of experience in drafting

---

[10] But inscriptions honoring athletic victors are known from an early date. Pausanias (3.14) even reported seeing one inscribed with the victories of Chionis, a contemporary of Battus (ca. 664 B.C.). The inscription recording his seven victories was probably erected later.

[11] A possible exception was published by Woodward, *BSA* 26 (1923-25), p. 231, no. 22. It was dated on the basis of letter forms only and did not originate in Sparta.

such decrees.[12] Tod had not seen *IG* V 1, 5 before his catalogue was published, but the language of that decree might confirm his judgement (*infra* p. 83ff).

It has already been suggested that the absence of proxeny decrees before the second century should not be attributed to the prevalence of illiteracy in Sparta so much as to a lack of interest in, or need for, them. But it is not difficult to find the probable cause for the sudden development of interest in such decrees among the Spartans. The most obvious reason was the new relationship of the city with the Achaean League and with Rome. Possible influence of the Achaean League may be seen in the appearance in *IG* V 1, 4 of an official known as the ἐπιδαμιοργός, an office new to Spartan inscriptions (and unique) but common in Achaean cities and in the league itself. For Roman influence, we have only to consider *IG* V 1, 7 in which a hotel for visiting Romans and mediators is mentioned (*infra* p. 82). This is not to say that the Spartans set up proxeny decrees only for Achaeans or Romans; the indications point rather to a generally changed climate for Sparta under the stimulus of Achaean League membership and especially by her ties with Rome. Surely it is not a mere coincidence that no proxeny decrees have survived from an earlier period; if any existed earlier they must have been few in number. Therefore it seems likely that the absence of such decrees before the second century and their small numbers in all periods is more attributable to political considerations than to an inability, because of illiteracy, to produce them.

Altogether, the public decrees of Sparta provide little evidence for literacy or illiteracy, but inscriptions of other types are more numerous and seem to be more helpful. Most of the inscriptions from the earlier centuries are for votive offerings of some type. There are also a number of grave stelae, a few artists' and masons' names, several lists of names, and a few victory dedications set up by victorious athletes.

6. *Private Votive Offerings*

Once again, problems in interpretation make an early appearance. What weight must we give to those pieces inscribed by the individual votary? To those produced by professionals? and How can we

[12] M. N. Tod and A. J. Wace, *A Catalogue of the Sparta Museum* (London 1906), p. 4, no. 217b.

distinguish between the two? It is evident that some degree of literacy is implied by the individually inscribed pieces, but the meaning of professional work, either mass produced or custom made, is ambiguous. The motive of the ancient votary who resorted to a professional craftsman might have been his own illiteracy; but it might equally well have been the desire, of a prosperous individual, to obtain good quality even at a high cost.[13] Similarly, personally inscribed offerings may be evidence of poverty quite as much as of literacy. Proof that resort to professionals did not necessarily indicate illiteracy, is provided by a series of eight fragments of offerings probably dedicated by the same individual (nos. 70-74; 82-84). The dedicator [B]ασιλί[δας], perhaps from one of the royal families (*s. vi a.*), appears to have purchased at least one (no. 74) custom made piece of pottery with her name written in white paint, presumably by the potter before firing. In other offerings the same name was incised with some sharp instrument, perhaps by her own hand.

The dedicatory inscriptions on stone pose similar problems of interpretation, but we might expect that individuals desiring such an inscription would have been more likely to resort to a professional stone worker. As in the case of the votive offerings on pottery, the work of professional stone masons does not necessarily indicate illiteracy of the individuals paying for the service. On the other hand, stone inscriptions cut by non-professionals probably are evidence of literacy among individual Spartans.

Therefore, I have placed greater emphasis on inscriptions which seem most likely to have been inscribed and dedicated by the individual making the offering. In this selection, as in so much else, absolute certainty as to which votive objects were actually inscribed by the individual votary and which were written by professionals cannot be expected.

Selection is partly by the process of elimination of offerings which seem least likely to have been hand inscribed by the dedicator. Among these, I have counted most of the inscribed bronze objects, on the grounds that the workmanship exhibited in these pieces may reasonably be considered beyond the skill of the ordinary person. Pottery sherds with painted names of deities and individuals strongly suggest a large scale production of ready made votive

[13] The practice may be likened to the modern use of engraved jewelry etc.

offerings. In fact, many from the fifth century closely resemble each other, and J. P. Droop noted that "a custom was introduced, but sparingly practised, of painting the design in yellow-pink paint on a black ground, in which technique a considerable number of dedicatory inscriptions are found." [14] Once again, there may have been exceptions and in some cases individuals could have inscribed an offering with paint or ink. But in every case in which the paint was applied before firing, we must expect the writing of a professional potter.

The large number of sherds with incised writing is less likely to have been the work of a professional potter, since this kind of inscription, like the ostraca in Athens, can be produced easily with any sharp instrument. But even here, certainty cannot be expected; and although many of the incised inscriptions seem to be the labored products of barely literate persons (e.g. no. 77), others (nos. 66, 67*) are beautifully written and indicate a high degree of competence in the writer. A few writers, unsatisfied with mere name scratching, wrote more. One of the early sherds from the acropolis (*s. vi a.*), was interpreted by Woodward as a prayer for safe return: [σ]αϝοσεῖε hοικάτ[ε], "May (s)he bring safely home." This inscription, on a fragment of tile (no. 75*), was not strictly a votive offering but was placed in the sanctuary for the goddess' attention.

Another (no. 76*), on a fragment of a cup dated by Woodward to the beginning of the sixth century (on the basis of the letter forms only), has the words (incised) ΜΕΤΡΙΟΣ ΕΓΟ ΑΛΚ̣ (or ΑΝ̣). Woodward was uncertain whether the first word was a name or the adverb = Μετρίως; he did not print the final two (or three) letters. Each word is divided by a vertical stroke. The possibilities suggested by Woodward are not very convincing and even he was far from certain. In the first place the word is an odd one for a personal name. I have found no parallels in Poralla or in any of the other prosopographies. Even if it was a name, it seems odd written on the pot with the pronoun since the pot itself was probably indicated by the words. It would be almost as if the pot were saying "I Metrios..."; very well for a man to say, but not a pot. As an adverb, the word has the disadvantage of being without a grammatical context.[15]

[14] J. P. Droop, *BSA*, 14 (1907-08), p. 43.

[15] Perhaps it was similar to the phrase Δραχμὰ ἐγὼ Ἥρα λευκ[ώλενε---] from an offering at Perachora (ca. 600-550 B.C.; Jeffery, p. 131, no. 17).

It might be better to interpret it as an adjective (nominative, masculine) in agreement with the unexpressed (?) name for a specific type of vessel. In that case, the word would have indicated a medium sized pot within that particular category. M. Lang listed some possible parallels from the Athenian Agora.[16] One (Ha 1), from the early fifth century, is inscribed with the letters Μηέτριο which Lang read as μέτριον as if it were of the neuter gender. She described the pot as a "middle-sized vessel" and said that comparisons with other olpes justified the description. Another (Ha 12), part of a black-glazed oinochoe handle of the fourth century, also has the word μέτρι(ον) incised. Could not the inscription on the Spartan vessel have had an identical purpose? The fact that, on this pot, the adjective is of the masculine gender is not a serious objection since the words on the Athenian pots were incomplete. Perhaps the word on those pots should have been filled out as a masculine adjective. On the other hand it might have depended entirely upon the instinct of the pot owner. It is possible, but far from certain, that the two or three letters at the end of the inscription was the owner's name. It might also have been the name of the pot type of which this was a medium sized specimen.

From the Laconian-controlled island of Kythera comes a somewhat similar example of a pot inscribed with an indication of capacity. The vessel is of Laconian manufacture in the shape of a mug. Incised on it is the word ἡμικοτύλιον (*s. vi a.*).[17]

Less ambitious, but even more interesting, was the man who

H

incised his pot with the letters κκκκκκκκ (no. 181*). Woodward thought that this inscription, on a fragment of a large jar, was the work of an individual who was illiterate but still wanted to write something on a dedication "even if the text were only nonsense." But the neatly incised letters do not look like the work of a man who was unfamiliar with writing. Moreover, the correspondence between the eight Kappas and the alphabetic symbol for the numeral eight written directly above them, seems too striking for mere coincidence.

M. Lang, in a detailed article about such notations on pottery

---

[16] M. Lang, *The Athenian Agora, Graffiti and Dipinti* (Princeton 1976), vol. 21, p. 59ff.

[17] B. A. Sparks and L. Talcott, *The Athenian Agora, Black and Plain Pottery* (Princeton 1970), vol. 12, p. 9.

fragments from the Athenian Agora, gave numerous examples in which the capacity of storage jars was so indicated.[18] There was no uniformity of technique but the most common method was the use of a simple stroke for each measured unit poured into a larger container. Thus a worker, when determining the capacity of a storage jar, poured into it a number of smaller measures, noting each measure with a mark on the larger jar. As a variant, several examples are given in which the measurer made a stroke for each unit, but substituted the alphabetic numeral for the final stroke. Thus seven strokes followed by Eta indicated eight units (nos. 11-14 [Lang]).

Lang also gave examples of a pure acrophonic system in which the initial letter of a number or unit was used to represent the unit

XX[

(e.g. κ = κοτύλη). In this system the notation HK[represented "at least two and a half *choes* plus at least one *kotyle*" (no. 32 [Lang]). Similarly the notation]XXHK[represented "at least two *choes* plus a half-*kotyle*" (no. 33). Here, Lang determined, the letter H stands for ἡμίσυ "one-half" since it appears between the large and small units.

In the Spartan inscription, the Eta appears directly above the eight Kappas and must represent the sum total of the *kotylae* enumerated below.

If this interpretation is correct, it has interesting implications for an every day type of literacy among the Spartans. The writer of these Kappas was not illiterate; he was merely trying to determine the capacity of a large jar (ca. 2 litres) by pouring smaller units (*kotyle*) into it. After pouring each unit he scratched a Kappa onto the larger jar. When it was full he wrote the total using the alphabetic numeral eight. Anyone could then see the total capacity at a glance without bothering to count the individual Kappas.

Examples of dedicatory inscriptions on stone which strongly suggest the presence of highly skilled craftsmen in Sparta even in the early sixth century are no. 33, a very nicely inscribed epigram dedicated by an athletic victor (*fin. s. vi a.*), and especially no. 34, the hymn to Athena. Even the famous Damonon inscription (*IG* V 1, 213), of the early fifth century demonstrates the abilities and techniques of professional stone workers.

---

18 M. Lang, "Numerical Notation on Greek Vases," *Hesperia* 25 (1956), pp. 1-24.

In rather striking contrast to these, is a number of inscriptions so poorly written as to preclude all but the slightest probability of professional workmanship. Some of these (no. 8), were not even inscribed with hammer and chisel, but were merely scratched onto soft limestone with a sharp instrument. Hondius and Woodward have also noted the probability that many of these early votive offerings on stone must have been the personal work of the "votaries to whom writing was clearly an effort." [19]

A good example is provided by *IG* V 1, 224. It was dedicated by a literate person sometime near the very beginning of the sixth century or, perhaps, at the end of the seventh. Desiring to make a votive offering to Artemis, he tried with only modest success to inscribe the goddess' name onto a type of soft sandstone. He did well enough with the first three letters, but then, for some reason, he seems to have been undecided about the fourth. Uncertain whether he should write Alpha or Mu, he compromised and wrote both, making Mu, which he then corrected to Alpha (; cf. no. 23). The dedication was roughly cut and seems surely to have been the work of an individual who, though not a good writer, still was literate enough to recognize and to correct his own mistake (i.e. he could read even if just a little). More likely still to be the work of non-professionals is no. 50, a fragment of soft limestone inscribed at the end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century. The inscription is a list of eight names which were scratched into the surface of the stone with some sharp instrument. In this piece, several writing styles are apparent. Lines 5 and 6 are the best made and the letters are inscribed much deeper than the other lines. There is also considerable variation in letter shapes and sizes. The probability that this inscription was the work of a professional hired by illiterate customers is very slight.

Is it possible to distinguish between literate persons of different social classes? Not very often if at all; and especially when such attempts are made on the basis of names.

But there are some inscriptions which seem to have been made by stone masons and, if the tradition of the non-working Spartan citizen soldier is true, we might assume that at least these pieces were inscribed by Perioikoi or even lower class artisans. The most convincing examples are nos. 38 (Γλαῦχς), 39 (Ἅρμος), and 40

[19] Hondius and Woodward, *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 113.

(Τέχναρχος). Tod (*C.S.M.* nos. 785 and 786) noted that nos. 38 and 39 were inscribed on unfinished surfaces of the stones and concluded that they were masons' names not intended to be visible. Jeffery thought that they were architectural blocks from the Throne of Apollo at Amyclae and that they had been inscribed by workers at the site. In no. 1 we have an apparent artist's name.

In other cases it might be tempting to think of bearers of certain types of names as slaves either because of the offensive connotations of such names or because they are known elsewhere. One possible inference from this supposition is that writing was widely known and that people of all social classes, including some slaves, made use of it for votive offerings. One obvious example is Κόπρις (no. 2), one of the limestone plaques dedicated in the Orthia shrine and apparently inscribed by the dedicator. Hondius remarked that the person who made the dedication was just barely literate. The name is also known from Melos (*IG* XII 3, 1184) and especially from Egypt where it was frequently given to children who had been abandoned by their parents and often raised as slaves. P. Perdrizet thought that the name was derived from Κοπρία (sewer) rather than from Κόπρος.[20] But, as Woodward pointed out, the present Kopris was not Egyptian and the observations of Perdrizet do not necessarily apply. Moreover the aristocratic Orthia shrine seems an unlikely place for the dedications of slaves or freedmen.

It is probably not possible to determine, on the basis of a name, even as unpleasing as that of Kopris, that its bearer was a slave or that he was of the lower classes. It is more likely that the name Kopris was nothing more than a nick-name or secondary family name with no relation to social status.[21]

Upper class Spartans were known to have had such names (though none quite so bad). Zeuxidamos was said by Herodotus (6.71) to have been called Κυνίσκος (puppy) by some Spartiates. His granddaughter was called Κυνίσκα (bitch). She was so named by Pausanias who described her victory in the chariot race at Olympia (3.8) and in the inscribed statue base which commemorated the event (*IG* V 1, 1564a).

---

[20] See P. Perdrizet, "Copria," *Rev. des Et. Anc.*, 23 (1921), pp. 85-94.

[21] F. Bechtel, *Die einstämmigen männlichen Personennamen des Griechischen, die aus Spitznamen* (Berlin 1898), p. 5ff., p. 77 for Κόπρις. Note also that Xenophon named his son Γρῦλος, a near synonym for Μόλοβρος.

Μόλοβρος is related to μολόβριον, used of the young of swine, and to the adjective μολοβρός, used by Homer (*Od.* 17.219; 18.26) to describe a beggar. But the historical Spartan who bore this name was anything but a beggar. He donated a full talent of silver to the Spartan war fund in ca. 427 B.C. (*IG* V 1, 1, side b), and was probably the father of the Spartan commander at Sphacteria in 425 B.C. (Thuc. 4.8).

Thus one might conclude that names of this type, far from being identifiable as slave names, were probably not in any way depreciatory in feeling or intent. There is no votive offering that can be identified as the dedication of a slave or Helot.[22] Indeed Kopris might as easily have been an aristocrat as a slave and, in view of the fact that he was a worshipper at the Orthia shrine, this is the greater probability.

Multiple dedications by the same individual, even though the total sample of inscribed offerings is small and the readings of the pottery sherds is too uncertain to permit an accurate statistical evaluation, may suggest that even this extremely limited use of writing was not practiced by many.

Of the twenty-two limestone plaques dedicated at the Orthia sanctuary, four were dedicated by two individuals; nos. 4 and 5 by Praxinos; nos 12* and 13* by Trouthos (who may also have dedicated no. 26*). From the Hellenistic period we have five dedications by Chilonis (who was thought by Woodward to have been a daughter of Cleomenes II, Leotychides, or Leonidas II).[23]

Of the inscribed pottery sherds from the Acropolis (ca. 150), there is a strong probability of several multiple dedications. For example nos. 63-67* by a person whose name is incomplete; nos. 70-74 and 82-85 by Basilidas (?). Hellenistic offerings include seven by Damaris*, who may have been a member of the Eurypontid family which used the name Damaratos.[24] Eurystheneia dedicated five*. Perhaps she was a member of the Agiad family which, alone,

---

[22] I do not include the manumissions decrees from Taineron (*IG* V 1, 1228-1234) in this statement. These dedications include names as diverse as Θεάρες (*IG* V 1, 1228) and Αἰσχρίον (*IG* V 1, 1231); both *s. v a.* These were slaves, of course, but this fact can be known only from the circumstances of the names' appearance. The same name Αἰσχρίον belonged to a Spartan citizen honored by a foreign state (*IG* V 1, 8; *s. ii a.*).

[23] *BSA* 24, p. 110, fig. 2, nos. 61-65.

[24] *BSA* 30, p. 243, fig. 2, nos. 1-7.

is known to have had members named Eurysthenes.[25] The name Basilidas, made on the root Βασιλεύς, might also be suggestive. But in light of what has already been said about nick-names in general, it is better not to make assumptions about her probable social class.

It seems likely, then, that the early dedicators were relatively few in number and that most, if not all, were from the upper classes.

To be sure, the level of achievement was limited in most cases and it is not possible to determine precisely what individual limits might have been. Consideration of possible reading materials might suggest, however, that reading abilities could not have been great. In fact, the votive offerings themselves are probably pretty fair examples of personal attainments at this time. For most, writing was the primary skill (as severely limited as it was); reading, if done at all, was of lesser importance.

[25] *ibid.*, nos. 8-12.

CHAPTER TWO

ARCHAIC SPARTA

The introduction and development of the Phoenician alphabet into Greece is beyond the scope of the present study; moreover, a very extensive bibliography already exists on the subject. Proposed dates range from the fourteenth to the late eighth century B.C.[1] But if there is a general consensus of opinion at the present time, it favors the mid-eighth century or within a few years either way. For Attica, graffiti exist at, or very close to this early date, but none appear in Sparta until more than a hundred years later. There is no trace of writing there before the very end of the seventh century, when a few inscribed votive offerings begin to make an appearance.

Even though there are no earlier physical remains, there are literary memories which may suggest the presence, in Sparta, of writing at an earlier date. In the beginning were the ephor lists, which record names back to ca. 756 B.C.[2] Perhaps no modern scholar believes that these lists were written down from the very beginning. For, if they were, we must suppose them to have been almost exactly contemporary with the alphabet itself; surely an impossible supposition. A more likely possibility might be that the lists were preserved by memory for four or five generations before being committed to writing.[3] This assumption would allow for the necessary passage of time for the new art to be brought to Sparta, and for it to find adequate development and acceptance in order for it to be adapted to such a use.

But we should also recognize that the new alphabet with its relatively small number of signs, was by no means as difficult as many other systems of writing. Once learned, even by a few people,

---

[1] Jeffery, *op. cit.*, pp. 12ff.

[2] The kings lists have names from an earlier period but the earliest names are probably mythical.

[3] Jacoby, *Atthis*, p. 305, n. 24, thought that even though ephors existed earlier than Chilon "whom Pamphila (Diog. Laert. 1.68) called the πρῶτος ἔφορος," that it was very doubtful that an actual list of them existed. Only in 556/5 B.C. (with Chilon) did the ephors become so important that they were used for dating.

it could have been put to immediate use, and one of the first uses might well have been the recording of the ephor and king lists. After all, writing a list of names is only a short advance over writing of individual names which E. A. Havelock called "the first and often the only thing you learn to write" [4] in a pre- or semi-literate society.

Polyaenus described a curious custom of the Spartans said to have been originated by Tyrtaeus. According to this account (unsubstantiated elsewhere) Spartan soldiers, about to go into battle against the Messenians, would write their names on Spartan σκυτάλαι which they would then tie around their left wrists. According to Polyaenus, the purpose of the alleged practice was to insure proper identification of soldiers killed in battle.

> ... ἵνα δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκείων ἐν τῇ τῶν νεκρῶν ἀναιρέσει γνωρίζοιτο ἕκαστος, ἐπὶ [τὰς] σκυταλίδας τοὔνομα γραψάντων καὶ τῇ λαιᾷ χειρὶ φερόντων ... (*Strat.* 1.17)
>
> ...The soldiers are to write their names on *skytalai* which are to be attached to their left hands so that, in the gathering of the dead, each man may be identified by his kinsmen.

Apart from the important (but probably insoluble) question of authenticity, other questions come easily to mind. Given the closeness of Spartan society and the relatively small numbers involved, would such a device really have been necessary for the identification of the dead? Would not visual inspection by acquaintances have served as well? Did Polyaenus (or his source) use the word *skytale* in its technically correct sense to indicate the two-part message staff? If so, what was done with the other half? Perhaps a reasonable explanation is that the other part, kept in Sparta, served as a check-list for the soldiers who failed to return; or perhaps it was merely a register of participants. The story is a tantalizing one, and it is a great pity that we have no other evidence concerning it. But it is entirely possible that such a custom could have been the first practical and public use of writing in Sparta. It would have spread rapidly and naturally to other uses such as the recording of the ephor and king lists. The earliest surviving inscribed list of names from Sparta, though, was erected more than a century after Tyrtaeus (no. 50).

Slightly earlier than Tyrtaeus was the founding of the Carnean

---

[4] Havelock, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Festival (*Ol.* 26 [676/73 B.C.]). The victory lists associated with this festival were published by Hellanicus (*infra* p. 64) in the mid-fifth century, but there is no actual proof that they were written down from the beginning.

1. *Early Records*

The essential questions of interest here are, What kinds of records did the Spartans have? and How far back may they be traced? For the later years, records of many kinds were extensive and will be dealt with more fully in another place (*infra* p. 88ff). But for the early period of Spartan history, the evidence is meager, as might be expected, and much of what is known comes down to us through late sources. It might be anticipated that most of these writers, under the influence of their more literate cultures, probably took it for granted that public archives were a standard feature in early Greek cities.

The Spartans had written collections of oracles at least by the end of the sixth century. Herodotus (5.90) said that King Cleomenes, while occupying the Acropolis of Athens, found there the collection of oracles compiled by Hippias the son of Pisistratus. These he confiscated and carried away to Sparta where they became important sources of intelligence about the Alcmeonid conspiracy with the Delphic oracle. The details and even the existence of the conspiracy were unknown to the Spartans until the arrival of the oracles in Sparta where they were read and studied; here they learned the details of the plot:

> τῶν πρότερον μὲν ἦσαν ἀδαέες, τότε δὲ Κλεομένεος κομίσαντος ἐς Σπάρτην ἐξέμαθον. (Hdt. 5.90)
>
> Formerly the Spartans were unaware of these oracles; but then, after Cleomenes brought them to Sparta, they made a close study of them.

We may assume (but Herodotus did not actually say) that the Spartans preserved these new documents together with an already extant collection of oracles pertaining to Sparta. He also said that oracles were kept in the houses of the kings and that the four Pythiasts had access to them. No writer specified an earlier date for these collections, but it does not seem likely that Cleomenes would have taken them away if they were not already held in high regard by the Spartans; they had no intrinsic value of their own.

Thus the conclusion that a collection already existed in Sparta is all but unavoidable; but how much earlier?

The prose rhetra quoted by Plutarch (*Lyc.* 6) and probably copied by him from Aristotle, was often identified in Spartan minds with the Delphic oracle.

> Διὸς Συλλανίου καὶ Ἀθανᾶς Συλλανίας ἱερὸν ἱδρυσάμενον, φυλὰς φυλάξαντα καὶ ὠβὰς ὠβάξαντα, τριάκοντα γερουσίαν σὺν ἀρχαγέταις καταστήσαντα, ὥρας ἐξ ὥρας ἀπελλάζειν μεταξὺ Βαβύκας τε καὶ Κνακιῶνος· οὕτως εἰσφέρειν τε καὶ ἀφίστασθαι: δάμῳ δὲ κυρίαν ἦμεν καὶ κράτος.
>
> After founding a sanctuary of Zeus Syllanius and Athena Syllania and after establishing the phylai and obai and creating a gerousia of thirty men including the kings, convene an assembly from season to season between Babyka and Knakion. Thus introduce measures and dismiss them; but the ultimate power is to be for the demos.

Perhaps nothing in Spartan history has aroused as much controversy as this ancient document, and the law giver whose name is so closely attached to it. Opinions regarding its date vary widely, from the late ninth century to the late fifth. E. Meyer,[5] who separated the rhetra from its supposed divine author, regarded the document as a product of the classical period no more than fifty years before the time of Aristotle. At the other extreme is K. M. T. Chrimes who accepted the existence of Lycurgus as a historical figure whose reforms may be dated "with precision in 809 B.C." [6] In her account, the rhetra is divided into two historical periods, the first dating from the time of Lycurgus himself. N. G. L. Hammond also believed in the historicity of Lycurgus and dated the reforms to the end of the ninth century.[7]

Elsewhere, Lycurgus has been identified as a god, either Apollo (G. Gilbert) [8] or Zeus Lykaios (U. von Wilamowitz),[9] and as a priest of Apollo (H. Gelzer) [10] where the name was interpreted as

[5] E. Meyer, "Lycurgos von Sparta," *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte* I (Halle a. Saale 1892), p. 264.

[6] K. M. T. Chrimes, *Ancient Sparta* (Manchester 1948), pp. 346 and 413.

[7] N. G. L. Hammond, "The Lycurgan Reform at Sparta," *JHS* 70 (1950), p. 57 and 64.

[8] G. Gilbert, *Altspartanische Geschichte* (Göttingen 1872), pp. 81 and 118.

[9] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Lykurgos, Hom. Untersuchungen* (Berlin 1884), p. 285.

[10] H. Gelzer, "Lykurgos und die Delphische Priesterschaft," *RM* 28 (1873), p. 50.

a priestly title ("hieratischer Titel"). He has also been identified as a gangster turned hero and ending as a god (P. R. Coleman-Norton),[11] as the ephor Chilon (V. Ehrenberg),[12] as a hero (H. T. Wade-Gery [13] and others), and of course, as a legend, either deliberately created in Hellenistic times (G. Grote),[14] or in earlier times by more natural processes. These are the major theories, bad, good, even brilliant; only the evidence remains the same—sufficient to encourage new attempts but not to permit firm conclusions. But perhaps some certainty may be found; at least a very conservative estimate of the earliest demonstrable date for written texts in Sparta.

Plutarch obviously knew of the rhetra and copied it out exactly as he had received it, even though he did not understand all of it. Presumably his source was Aristotle who, believing it to be genuine, also copied it out as he had received it, and without full understanding of all its archaic references. Herodotus also knew something of it, or at least of the traditional connection between Lycurgus and the Delphic oracle.[15] Earliest of all though was Tyrtaeus who, in the latter part of the seventh century, showed a knowledge of a document related to the rhetra. His words εὐθείαις Ῥήτραις ἀνταπαμειβομένους (Plut. *Lyc.* 6.), in which he described the duty of the citizen body as responding with straight rhetrae to the decisions of their leaders, is an echo of the addition to the original rhetra made by Kings Polydorus and Theopompus (cf. *infra* p. 27). It was so understood by Plutarch.

H. T. Wade-Gery [16] considered the rhetra to be contemporary with Tyrtaeus and, perhaps, even his own creation. Thus the late seventh century is the earliest date to which a written collection of oracles may be traced, a time corresponding roughly to the first inscribed votive offerings in the Orthia shrine.

On the other hand, arguments suggesting greater antiquity for the oracle are not altogether unpersuasive, even if one does not accept Lycurgus as a historical figure. These arguments generally assume a period of purely oral existence for the rhetra although

[11] P. R. Coleman-Norton, *Studies*, W. K. Prentice (Princeton 1941), p. 61.
[12] V. Ehrenberg, *Neugründer des Staates* (Munich 1925), pp. 13, 30, 49.
[13] H. T. Wade-Gery "The Growth of the Dorian States," *C.A.H.*, 3 (1925), p. 562, n. 2.
[14] G. Grote, *History of Greece* II (N.Y. 1859), p. 396ff.
[15] Herodotus, 1.65.
[16] Wade-Gery, *op. cit.*, p. 562.

Hammond went so far as to propose that "the original Rhetra was a written document of the late ninth century, preserved among the μαντεῖαι of the Spartan state...."

While it is not possible for me to believe in a written Spartan document so early, I agree in general that Tyrtaeus knew of and wrote about something earlier than himself. This seems reasonably clear from the fact that his verses refer, not directly to the rhetra, but to the intermediary rider thought by Plutarch to have been added by the kings Polydorus and Theopompus. And so the evidence stops with Tyrtaeus. But, assuming that his account of the oracle was not a deliberate fraud, he was looking back to the rider and, beyond it, to the rhetra itself. Perhaps Tyrtaeus was even instrumental in giving the first written expression to the older tradition.

No less tenuous is our knowledge of any ancient chronicles of which the rhetra might have formed a part. Later writers knew of such chronicles, but their historical perspective is not always precise and, when they referred to these documents we cannot even be certain of the dates involved. For example, Plutarch's account of Lycurgus' prohibition of written laws (*Lyc.* 13) is not only anachronistic; it is also contradictory, since Plutarch said in another place that the Spartans kept the oracle concerning Lycurgus in their most ancient chronicles (ἐν ταῖς παλαιοτάταις ἀναγραφαῖς —*Adv. Coloten* 17). It is clear that Plutarch considered the chronicles to be very ancient, but there is no indication that he had any precise idea of their age. There is no doubt, however, that he had personal knowledge of the chronicles, since he referred to them elsewhere, in the only reference known to me, wherein an ancient writer specifically said that he had done research in the Spartan records: ἡμεῖς δ' εὕρομεν ἐν ταῖς Λακωνικαῖς ἀναγραφαῖς (*Ages.* 19.6).

Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.43) also referred to ancient chronicles of the Spartans in a context indicating that his informants knew of public records going back at least as far as the last quarter of the fourth century.

Pausanias (3.11.11) was much more obscure, but he did provide an additional hint that the Spartans might have used some written records at an early date. After mentioning the fact that he had seen a statue of King Polydorus, the son of Alcamanes, he added that the Spartan magistrates used his image to seal anything which needed to be sealed. Pausanias was referring to seal stones, of

course, and he probably thought of them as they were used for sealing written documents, even though they could also be used for other things such as pantry doors (Arist. *Thesm.* 415ff). Unfortunately, Pausanias was not specific enough here, and he created the impression of believing that a practice existing in his own day originated during, or soon after, the kingship of Polydorus (fl. ca. 743 B.C.).[17] If so, the stones were probably used at first for purposes other than writing since the date of Polydorus very nearly coincides with the first appearance of the alphabet in Greece. If Pausanias was correct, and if the practice was a frequent one (even though not so ancient as Pausanias thought), it is odd that none (or no more than a few) of the stones have survived.[18]

2. *Preliminary Conclusions and Summary*

Evidence for the earliest use of writing in Sparta is elusive and even contradictory. But what are the possible interpretations of the evidence presented so far?

The ephor list, in written form, is contemporary with the earliest names on it (ca. 756 B.C.) or is only a little later. But this would require us to believe that the lists were written right at, or even prior to, the generally accepted date of the introduction of the alphabet into Greece.

The lists existed in oral form only for many generations, and were committed to writing later.

The oracle-rhetra, and perhaps a collection of which it was a part, goes back at least to the late seventh century or even earlier.

---

[17] Pausanias (4.5.10), following Sosibius, dated the first Messenian war to ca. 743 B.C. (*Ol.* 9.2 - *Ol.* 14.1).

[18] See the official publication: *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, 1906-10*, ed. R. M. Dawkins (London 1929), p. 228 (pls. CXXXIX-CXLVII). The British excavations at Sparta have uncovered eighteen complete seal stones and eight fragments, all of which belong to the end of the eighth and beginning of the seventh centuries. Thus the date of the stones is appropriate for Polydorus, but the images on the seals do not correspond well with the statement of Pausanias. Most of the seals represent fabulous animals or birds, and only two could possibly represent Polydorus. Plate CXXXIX (o), shows a frontal view of a man's face. He has long hair, a beard, and grotesque expression. The other possibility is pl. CXXXIX (i) which shows a Spartan warrior walking with shield. It might be argued that not many seals of this kind are to be expected since each would last for many years; old ones, like old and broken coin dies, were probably destroyed. In any case the seals are too early for use with written documents.

If written lists of ephors existed earlier, there is no reason to think that the oracles did not.

Pausanias had no time perspective and the practice that existed in a later period was falsely assumed to have been an ancient one; the seal stones were used only for ornamental purposes, or for sealing doors and wine jars.

Doubtless this summary does not exhaust the number of possibilities, but unless more evidence is forthcoming, we cannot be sure of the existence of written documents (or writing) in Sparta earlier than the late-seventh century. At present, however, all evidence points to this time; for the period earlier than Tyrtaeus, there is only inference.

One important factor in the consideration of these very early dates, is the total absence of inscribed votive offerings before the end of the seventh century. There is certainly no lack of offerings from an earlier period in the sanctuary of Orthia, but none were inscribed much before ca. 600 B.C. If much writing existed in Sparta before the time of Tyrtaeus, even if we suppose it to have been limited to a few individuals in positions of responsibility, it seems very strange that personal votive dedications and other types of inscriptions postponed their appearance for so long. Furthermore, pottery and other inscribed objects, once started, quickly became fairly common and were produced both by professionals and by private individuals. In short, there was a complete absence of inscribed offerings until the end of the seventh century, and then a small but continuous presence. If we assume that written records began with, or only shortly before, Tyrtaeus, then we need not be surprised at the late appearance of the inscribed votive offerings (only 25 to 50 years later). But a very long interval between the first inscriptions and the supposed beginning of writing in Sparta must be regarded as odd.

3. *Written Laws in Sparta*

So much of early Spartan history has been attributed to Lycurgus that it is impossible to devise a chronology able to account for everything. Doubtless, early lawgivers and reformers were capable of exerting a much more direct influence on their own societies than their modern counterparts, and the deeds of Solon and Cleisthenes provide ample proof of this fact. Therefore we might do well to avoid dogmatic assertions that the more remote figures such

as Lycurgus (or even Moses), were no more than myths. Nevertheless it is clear that a large body of legend did grow up around this name, and that not all of it can be true. Still, there might be some truth in many of the traditions, even if the attribution to Lycurgus is false. For example he is said to have prohibited the use of inscribed tomb stones, except for soldiers who had fallen in battle and for certain priestesses; examination of the inscriptions reveals that there are very few grave stones from the early centuries, but that most of those which do survive are indeed for soldiers. A few others appear to have been for women, perhaps the priestesses (nos. 43, 110). Lycurgus is also said to have prohibited the use of coined money in Sparta and it is well known that a local coinage was not created until quite late times. Thus some traditions may be true, but it is obvious that if Lycurgus was earlier than the late seventh century, these two cannot rightly be attributed to him.

He was also said to have forbidden the use of written laws in Sparta.

> Νόμους δὲ γεγραμμένους ὁ Λυκοῦργος οὐκ ἔθηκεν, ἀλλά, μία τῶν καλουμένων Ῥητρῶν ἐστιν αὕτη.
>
> . . . .
>
> τὰ δὲ μικρὰ καὶ χρηματικὰ συμβόλαια καὶ μεταπίπτοντα ταῖς χρείαις ἄλλοτε ἄλλως, βέλτιον ἦν μὴ καταλαμβάνειν ἐγγράφοις ἀνάγκαις μηδὲ ἀκινήτοις ἔθεσιν, ἀλλ' ἐᾶν ἐπὶ τῶν καιρῶν, προσθέσεις λαμβάνοντα καὶ ἀφαιρέσεις, ἃς ἂν οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι δοκιμάσωσι. τὸ γὰρ ὅλον καὶ πᾶν τῆς νομοθεσίας ἔργον εἰς τὴν παιδείαν ἀνῆψε.
>
> Μία μὲν οὖν τῶν ῥητρῶν ἦν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, μὴ χρῆσθαι νόμοις ἐγγράφοις. (Plut. *Lyc.* 13.1-3)
>
> Lycurgus did not establish the use of written laws and in fact one of his so-called rhetrea prohibited them.
>
> . . . .
>
> In respect to minor affairs and to contracts relating to money or to circumstantial needs which vary with time, he thought that it would be better to avoid the use of written requirements and permanent customs; but to permit the educated citizens to introduce additions or subtractions (to their legal affairs). appropriate to changing circumstances. Indeed, he entrusted the entire responsibility for law-making to his educational design.
>
> One of the rhetrae was, as has been said, a prohibition of written laws.

If Plutarch was correct in saying that the Spartans did not have

written laws of any kind or regulations for business contracts, this passage would provide persuasive evidence for a very limited use of writing in the city. This impression is intensified when the passage is considered in the light of Plutarch's assertion that the Spartans learned to read and write for practical reasons only, and that all other forms of education were excluded.

> Γράμματα ἕνεκα τῆς χρείας ἐμάνθανον τῶν δὲ ἄλλων παιδευμάτων ξενηλασίαν ἐποιοῦντο, οὐ μᾶλλον ἀνθρώπων ἢ λόγων. (*Mor.* 237A)
>
> They originally learned their letters for practical purposes, but would, from time to time, banish other forms of education, written works and men (foreign teachers?) alike.

It is at once apparent that the practical needs of the Spartans must have been very slight if the use of written documents formed no part of the machinery of government or of the regulation of their commercial relationships. Yet this is the implication of Plutarch's remarks. But before accepting these comments as factual evidence of illiteracy, it is necessary to examine them in greater detail, together with other existing evidence.

As has already been stated, Plutarch, looking back many centuries to a culture simpler than his own, often reported interesting traditions and legends as if they were factual; he occasionally was guilty of anachronism and sometimes of self-contradiction. In *Moralia* 221B, he related an incident in which someone inquiring of Zeuxidamus (*fl. init. s. v a.*) why the Spartans kept the laws concerning bravery unwritten rather than having them available for the young men to read, was told that youth in Sparta learned such things by physical application, and that this was better for them than learning through written materials. Here there is no reference to a general prohibition of all written laws, and Plutarch believed that written materials, if available, would have been usable by the typical Spartan youth.

A reader's first impulse might be to blame differing sources for this apparent contradiction, but the sources are not necessarily at fault here. Plutarch's use of sources is nearly always difficult, and nowhere more so than in *Moralia*. For the *Lycurgus* we have his own statement of principle.

> Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καίπερ οὕτως πεπλανημένης τῆς ἱστορίας, πειρασόμεθα τοῖς βραχυτάτας ἔχουσιν ἀντιλογίας ἢ γνωριμωτάτους μάρτυρας ἑπόμενοι τῶν γεγραμμένων περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀποδοῦναι τὴν διήγησιν. (*Lyc.* 1.3)

> However, although the history of these times is so entangled, I shall try, in presenting my account, to follow those authors who are least contradicted, or who have followed the most distinguished witnesses for what they have written about the man.

In addition, Plutarch identified at least a dozen sources and often referred to unnamed writers as "others" or "some." Of these writers, the most important for Plutarch's discussion of the rhetra and constitution of Lycurgus were Aristotle and Sphaerus the Borysthenite (*Lyc.* 6.7). But the question of sources for the Lycurgan prohibition of written laws is more difficult and Plutarch provided no clues. Nor is there any evidence for the source of the Zeuxidamus story. P. Stadter cautioned against expecting to find precise sources for the stories in *Mulierum Virtutes* or for other similar collections. He also pointed out that Plutarch made notes (*De Tranq. Anim* 464F-D, *De Cohib. Ir.* 457D) intended for use in his own compositions, but that he frequently neglected these notes and relied on his memory, which often must have been his direct "source." Obviously this practice encouraged mistakes and contradictions.

This peculiarity could easily explain the discrepancy between the passages cited in *Lycurgus* 13.1 and *Moralia* 221B. Plutarch knew and used many sources which shared, to some degree, the tradition of the unwritten constitution of Lycurgus. In addition to his ordinary sources, he made a personal examination of the Spartan archives (*supra* p. 22), during which, he must have noticed the absence of formal law codes from the earlier centuries. This probably made a deep impression on him and, perhaps, served to arouse his curiosity on the subject. At the same time he must have seen, or have been aware of, the numerous types of written laws which did exist long before his own time (*infra* p. 83); of these he said nothing. In *Lycurgus* 13.1 he simply overstated the actual situation and applied the prohibition to all types of legal documents and laws. In *Moralia* 221B, he was more specific.

One more slight inconsistency in the account of the unwritten laws is found in *Lycurgus* 6.4, where Plutarch said that the kings Polydorus and Theopompus made an addition to the rhetra.

> Πολύδωρος καὶ Θεόπομπος οἱ βασιλεῖς τάδε τῇ ῥήτρᾳ παρενέγραψαν. Αἰ δὲ σκολιὰν ὁ δᾶμος ἕλοιτο τοὺς πρεσβυγενέας καὶ ἀρχαγέτας ἀποστατῆρας ἦμεν."

> Polydorus and Theopompus the kings wrote the following into the rhetra: "But if the people make a crooked decision, the elders and kings (ἀρχαγέτας) are to dismiss the assembly."

Here the word παρενέγραψαν clearly implies a written document to which additions could be made. But perhaps it is best not to take Plutarch literally on this point; nor is it necessary to do so, since my purpose here is not so much to reconcile these discrepancies in Plutarch's narrative, as to demonstrate the unreliability of his statements as evidence of a total prohibition of written laws in Sparta.

While it is not possible to reconcile the Zeuxidamus story with the statement that Lycurgus had forbidden written laws of all types, it may be possible to see some truth in both traditions. Definitions become important at this point and differences of opinion are likely; but can the Great Rhetra or other rhetrae associated with Lycurgus be, in any way, defined as laws? Clearly they were not parts of a general codification of criminal or civil law which set out specific rights, responsibilities, prohibitions, and penalties. It was constitutional in nature and, regardless of ancient or modern titles and definitions, it existed in written form by the time of Tyrtaeus. The tradition of unwritten laws reported by Plutarch, even while reflecting the absence of a written law code, must have referred chiefly to the Lycurgan system of education for bravery and to details of public order. The Spartan ἀγωγή was understood by Plutarch as Lycurgan legislation, but it was more than a single enactment or decree; it was a traditional way of life of great antiquity and was observed more in the practice than in the written record. K. M. T. Chrimes dated the rhetra forbidding written laws in Sparta (*Lyc.* 13.4), to about 600 B.C. and suggested that it was made in reaction to the gradual development of written law codes in other Greek states; "its purpose was to safeguard the time-honored method of introducing modifications in the code, by making it impossible to convict the innovators of deception." [19] Plutarch had a somewhat similar approach but failed to see the more subtle aspects of the situation. He merely said that the real strength of a system of unwritten laws is that the basic constitution will be less likely to undergo change, but that minor legal affairs and civil contracts will be free to develop with changing circum-

[19] Chrimes, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

stances. It should also be noted that Plutarch did not say that written contracts and similar documents were prohibited, only that written regulations for them were not to be used. In fact the Spartans did make use of written contracts and other legal documents (*infra* pp. 75ff).

For Plutarch all of this depended, for its success, on the moral and physical education of the Spartan citizens; his remarks should not be taken literally to mean that no laws or legal documents of any kind were ever committed to writing.

Plato (*Leg.* 721E) provided additional, though less direct, evidence for the possible use of written laws in Sparta. Here, Megillus the Spartan, considering two versions, a long and a short, of a law proposed by the Athenian stranger, said that he would choose the longer version for enactment in writing and that he would do the same in the case of every law in which these alternatives were offered.

In *Leges* 891, the Cretan Clinias recommended that legal ordinances be put into writing so that even difficult problems could be understood by everyone, including the stupidest of citizens. Megillus the Spartan, perhaps in a mood of wishful thinking, expressed complete argeement.

In the case of Plato's testimony, we must beware of interpreting the remarks of a fourth century writer in such as way as to imply factual knowledge of earlier circumstances in Sparta. Moreover, the work is literary and philosophical in character, and when Plato spoke of written laws in Sparta, he may simply have been expressing general or ideal truths about the value of written laws everywhere.[20] He did not necessarily have specific facts in mind regarding actual Spartan usages. On the other hand, Plato's remarks might very well have reflected the attitudes of fourth century Athenians concerning the Spartans. If it had been common knowledge that the Spartans still did not use written laws, Plato could easily have avoided a potentially absurd scene simply by distributing the speeches in a different order.

Epigraphical evidence for written laws in Sparta is almost totally lacking, but there are at least two possibilities. The text of *IG* V 1, 722 (*s. v a.*) was interpreted by its first editors as a metrical funeral inscription. But more recently, A. J. Beattie re-

[20] See Plato, *Leges* 793B for a good description of the relationship between written and unwritten laws.

examined Fourmont's copy and determined that Fourmont, even though he tried to write exactly what he saw, still produced a series of letters which were unintelligible as Greek words or syllables. These, argued Beattie, should be explained "in terms of visual errors which Fourmont was likely to make in transcribing an unfamiliar alphabet." Beattie detected a "regular pattern" in these errors and determined that "the style of the engraver can be discovered with certainty." [21]

The text, as restored by Beattie, is really a fragment of a sacral law which regulated the weaving of sacred garments in the obe of Arkalon (previously unknown). Unmarried women were barred from holding the priesthood and provisions were made for purification rituals in the event that these prohibitions were not observed.

Since the inscription has not been seen since the eighteenth century, it is difficult to evaluate Beattie's re-interpretation. But his views were argued strongly and could well be correct.[22] If so, we have an interesting example of one type of written law in Sparta.

From the nearby coastal town of Gytheum, we have another example of what appears to have been a sacral law. *IG* V 1, 1155 (*s. v a.*), cut into the living rock near the bottom of the hill which overlooks the city, can still be seen. Even though the inscription has lost a few more letters since the publication of *IG* V 1, 1155 there is no doubt about the correctness of Kolbe's text.

> [1]Μεδένα [2]ἀποστρυθε͂σται· [3]α̣ἰ̣ δὲ κα ἀποστρυ[4][θ]ε͂ται, ἀϜατ̣ᾶτα̣ι̣ [5]ε̣͂ hὸ δο͂λος· [6]-ραι δὲ hόπε [7]νόμος, [8]ἀ̣ποστάτο.

---

[21] A. J. Beattie, "An Early Laconian Lex Sacra," *CQ*, n.s. I (1958), pp. 46-58.

[22] Fourmont did sometimes try to copy difficult letters exactly as he saw them. As an example, in his copy of *IG* V 1, 1, the very peculiar Sigma of line 2 (...ΤΙΟΣ) is much more accurate than Prott's correction printed by Kolbe. On the other hand, Fourmont made little or no effort to represent the actual form of other letters in the same inscription. Whether or not Fourmont's letter form Φ has "an un-Laconian look" which is "scarcely possible" (Beattie, pp. 47 and 54) is open to doubt. The letter form was indeed known in Laconian and appears in a list of names (*s. vi a.*) published by Woodward—no. 50, where it was mistakenly written for Theta. It is perfectly clear in *IG* V 1, 357 (*s. vi a.*) where it was written giant size (.06m). Its appearance in *IG* V 1, 1564 (*fin. s. v a.*) may be attributable to the work of a foreign mason since the stone was found on Delos. Beatties' correction of the letter, as written by Fourmont, produced the only Qoppa known to Laconian inscriptions. See Jeffery, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 187 and 192. For a generally favorable view of Fourmont's work, see L. Robert, "Hellenica," *Rev. Phil.* 18 (1944), p. 19, n. 2.

> Let no man deface (this sacred stone?); Let the violator, (master) or servant, pay the penalty...

The chief difficulty in the inscription has always been the verb ἀποστρυθῖσται which is unattested elsewhere. G. Skias, with Kolbe's approbation, equated it with the word λιθοτομεῖν.[23] Thus the inscription was either a general prohibition against cutting stone from the area or, what is more likely, a law forbidding the defacement of the sacred rock of Ζεὺς Καππώτας mentioned by Pausanias.

> Γυθίου δὲ τρεῖς μάλιστα ἀπέχει σταδίους ἀργὸς λίθος· Ὀρέστην λέγουσι καθεσθέντα ἐπ' αὐτοῦ παύσασθαι τῆς μανίας· διὰ τοῦτο ὁ λίθος ὠνομάσθη Ζεὺς Καππώτας κατὰ γλῶσσαν τὴν Δωρίδα. (Paus. 3.22)

> Not far from Gytheum, three stades at the most, is an unhewn stone. They say that Orestes was cured of his madness while seated upon it and, for this reason, the stone was named Zeus Kappotas in the Dorian dialect.

Kolbe thought that the inscribed stone was the same as the one described by Pausanias; in this he seems to have been almost certainly correct.

Apart from these two inscriptions there is no epigraphical evidence of the use of written laws in Sparta before the second century B.C. when references to proxeny laws began to make an appearance.

4. *Public Archives*

It has already been shown that the Spartans maintained at least some types of public records from an early date. As a minimum, these included the ancient oracles and the ephor lists; but there could have been other materials as well. Apparently the early records were characterized by a good deal of irregularity, and were not kept in one central location that could be called a public archive.

The first epigraphical reference to a public archive in Sparta is *IG* V 1, 18, 19, 20. The inscription, part of a complicated enactment regulating the Leonidea, is from the first century A.D. It contains provisions for the erection of the enactment on stone and says that the contest will be held annually according to the rhetra, obviously a written document. It is specified that lists of the winners' names are to be placed in a building called the *grammatophylakion* (γραμματοφυλάκιον). No reference to this building has appeared in earlier

[23] G. Skias, Ἐφ. Ἀρχ. (1892), p. 185, 1.

inscriptions, but the official in charge of these records (the γραμματοφύλαξ) and the secretaries are well known. The procedures outlined here were probably followed in somewhat earlier times as well. There is no reason to assume that the keeping of detailed records was an innovation of the first century A.D.; but we might naturally expect an expansion of the practise under Roman influence.

Since earlier inscriptions do not mention such a building, the questions to be answered are, how far back in Spartan history is it reasonable to assume the existence of public archives (however kept), and how extensive were they? It does not seem at all likely that the second question will ever be answered, but the answer to the first is that public records of some types were kept at least as early as the mid-sixth century B.C. If the poems of Tyrtaeus can, in any sense, be described as public documents, the date can be pushed back even further. No central building designated as the official records-office existed, however; for at least some purposes, the houses of kings and generals served as the city archives through the early fourth century and probably longer.

The appearance, in the latter part of the sixth century, of several lists of names, interpreted by Jeffery as lists of victors in local games (nos. 50, 58, and *IG* V 1, 1133 from Geronthrae), shows the use of records of another type. They were fairly well developed by this date and a somewhat earlier existence may be inferred. Number 50 was found on the Acropolis and was probably erected in or near the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. This suggests the possibility that this temple served as a depository for records of some types. Similarly, the temple of Apollo at Amyclae was the site designated for the erection of certain inscribed treaties and, it seems likely, for other records such as the victory lists for the Carnean festival.

Sosibius the grammarian (*FGrHist.* 595.1.3), writing in the first half of the second century B.C., said that Hellanicus wrote, in verse and prose versions, a book in which he compiled a list of the Carnean victors. Terpander was named as the first victor.

> ὅτι δὲ καὶ Τέρπανδρος ἀρχαιότερος Ἀνακρέοντος δῆλον ἐκ τούτων. τὰ Κάρνεια πρῶτος πάντων Τέρπανδρος νικᾷ, ὡς Ἑλλάνικος ἱστορεῖ ἔν τε τοῖς ἐμμέτροις Καρνεονίκαις κἀν τοῖς καταλογάδην. . . . (*FGrHist.* 4.85)

That Terpander is older than Anacreon is clear from the following: Terpander was the first victor in the Karneia, as Hellanicus

> declares in both the metrical and prose versions of his Karneian victory list....

Hellanicus visited many of the important places in Greece sometime after the mid-fifth century and he may have visited Sparta. This cannot be proved beyond doubt, but it is difficult to see how he could have written his book without some local sources. These may have been kept in book rolls in the temple, or they may have been inscribed on stone and erected nearby. Sosibius dated the first festival in the twenty-sixth Olympiad (676/73), but it is not necessary to assume that the lists of victors were written down from the very first.

Records of this type may well have been a part of the ancient chronicles mentioned by Plutarch (*Adv. Coloten* 17). Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.43; *supra* p. 22), speaking of the annals of the city, clearly implied their existence in the last part of the fourth century since he referred to the invasion of Laconia by Philip II (ca. 337). Were Plutarch and Tacitus referring to a temple depository at Amyclae or on the Acropolis? It is impossible to be certain; they might have been referring simply to disorganized collections of documents kept in the homes of kings and generals, or even to a combination of the two. Neither Tacitus nor the Spartan ambassadors would have known the date at which any chronicles or annals had been collected together.

5. *Inscribed Documents set up for Public Display*

Thucydides (5.18.10; 5.23; 5.77; 5.79) provided a good deal of information about treaties inscribed for public display. It seems likely that the Spartans preferred to set up inscribed copies of only the most important documents, or perhaps only when the erection of a public monument was a part of the agreement. In Thucydides 5.23.5, such a requirement was specified by the terms of a treaty made between Athens and Sparta.

> στήλην δὲ ἑκατέρους στῆσαι τὴν μὲν ἐν Λακεδαίμονι παρ' Ἀπόλλωνι ἐν Ἀμυκλαίῳ τὴν δὲ ἐν Ἀθήναις ἐν πόλει παρ' Ἀθηνᾷ.

> Each party (to this agreement) is to erect a stele (inscribed with the terms of this treaty). One stele is to be set up in Lacedaemon near the temple of Apollo at Amyclae, the other in Athens on the Acropolis near the temple of Athena.

Thucydides did not go so far as to say that other copies were

written or kept in a public place, but it is obvious that the inscribed stone was copied from an original which was on papyrus.[24] Surely it is not reckless to assume that at least one copy of the original document was kept in some appropriate place.

A similar specification is found in Thucydides 5.18.10, where it is stipulated that stelae are to be set up at Olympia, the Isthmus, and Delphi, as well as at Sparta and Athens.

No copies of any of these treaties have ever been found inscribed on stone in Sparta, and only one public decree earlier than the late third century has been found there (no. 101). The two war contributions lists (*IG* V 1, 1 and 219) are from the fifth century, but they cannot be called decrees. Nevertheless, such inscriptions must have been considered matters of special importance, perhaps serving a propaganda purpose in time of war. Another fifth century inscription (*IG* V 1, 1564) is a decree of the Spartans, but it was found on Delos and it is not possible to determine if a copy was erected in Sparta. Doubtless the original was kept in some local depository regardless of whether or not an inscribed copy was set up for public display.

In an important new article, A. L. Boegehold has shown that an official central archive was established at Athens in the Metroön sometime between the years 409/08 and 406/05 B.C. As a reason for the establishment of a central archive, Boegehold postulated the necessity of establishing order to replace the longstanding confusion caused by the preservation of documents in many scattered places in Athens.[25] Boegehold's conclusions are convincing and I note that the situation in Athens before the establishment of the central archive was strikingly similar to the confusion which must have prevailed in Sparta until somewhat later times.

It seems probable that the Spartans never set up very many decrees on stone at any time, even though they frequently made treaties with other states. In some cases, because of the terms of the agreement, they inscribed the document on stone for public display; but this was rare. Nevertheless the almost total absence of decrees or treaties from the fifth century does not prove in-

[24] But perhaps wooden tablets, leather or other material was used. Papyrus was very expensive even in Athens where it cost eight obols per χάρτη in the late fifth century, *IG* I² 374, lines 279-81 (and see Jeffery, p. 57). Sparta was known for leather goods, especially fine shoes.

[25] A. L. Boegehold, "The Establishment of a Central Archive at Athens," *AJA*, 76 (1972), pp. 23-30.

ability, because of illiteracy, to make regular use of such written documents; nor does it prove an absence of written laws. Instead, it suggests the natural tendencies of a non-democratic government and a rather secretive society. Almost certainly, the Spartans possessed written copies of treaties and agreements made with other states. There is no other way Spartan authorities could be sure to remember the terms, or even to know if the treaty was being observed by the other side.[26]

Thus it seems most likely that the regular practice was to keep these documents in local depositories which were nothing other than the houses of kings and generals. In fact it is well known that at least some copies of treaties were so kept. Plutarch related an incident in which King Agesilaus, after the death of Lysander, went to the general's house to consult a written copy of an important treaty with another state. A dispute had developed within the alliance and Agesilaus had to verify the terms of the agreement (cf. *infra* p. 50).

Significantly, Agesilaus did not consult a copy of the treaty inscribed on stone; doubtless there was none, perhaps because such a monument was not required by the terms of the agreement. Yet there is no reason to believe that this particular agreement was in any other way different from the treaties quoted by Thucydides. The two treaties in which the erection of inscribed stelae were required (Thuc. 5.18.10; 23.5) were also agreements for alliance with another city (Athens). Nor is it possible to argue that the treaty of Lysander (*Mor.* 229F) was recorded or handled differently because of changes in Spartan methods of keeping records which had occurred in the interval. On the contrary, all three treaties must have been very nearly contemporary, since the agreements quoted by Thucydides were made in 422/21 and Lysander was killed at Haliartus in 395 B.C.

Thus the evidence for the existence of public records in the fifth century or earlier is somewhat disappointing; but taken all together, it proves that public records did exist, and suggests that some types of records may have been kept in a public place (e.g. inscribed copies of treaties and the Carnean victory lists). The entire system was still in a primitive state, however, open to a good deal of irregularity. The fact that even Agesilaus had to go

[26] It should be remembered that some treaties were to be in force for fifty years.

to a private house to consult a public document warns us not to assume very much organization of records in Sparta at this time.

6. *Personal and Official Correspondence*

Somewhat related to the use of writing for laws and public records is the subject of written communications. People in a highly literate society take the art of letter writing for granted and can scarcely conceive of a culture in which it does not exist. Plutarch seems to have had this attitude when he recorded the series of letters from Spartan mothers to their sons at war. Pausanias is another late writer who could not imagine a time when Greeks did not write letters pretty much as they did in his own day. Thus he recorded the treachery of Aristocrates who betrayed the Messenian leader Aristomenes. This treason was accomplished by means of a letter containing the full details of Aristomenes' plans. It was carried to Anaxander the Spartan by a trusted slave who was intercepted on his return journey; in his possession was a written reply by the Spartans. Pausanias was not at all unaware of the date of this supposed incident. In fact he placed it shortly before the end of the second Messenian war, which he dated to the first year of the twenty-eighth Olympiad (668 B.C.), during the archonship of Autosthenes at Athens, and in the year when the Spartan Chionis was victor at Olympia (Paus. 4.22.4-7; 23.4). Despite the very early date of the alleged incident, Pausanias had no awareness of being anachronistic. Even though it is possible that both traditions recorded by Plutarch and Pausanias are true, each seems highly unlikely.

No reasonably convincing letters are recorded for the Spartans until more than two centuries later, when Thucydides related several incidents in which Spartans sent and received letters, and prepared written copies of treaties. In 1.128.3 - 134.4 he recorded an exchange of letters between Pausanias and Xerxes together with one letter from the ephors at Sparta to Pausanias. Two of these, the first letter from Pausanias to Xerxes (1.128.7), and Xerxes' reply (1.129.3), are quoted in full. Unfortunately there are serious doubts as to the authenticity of the letters. I believe that Beloch was correct in not accepting them as genuine,[27] but I do not go so far as he in dismissing them as pure nonsense. Nor do I

[27] K. J. Beloch, *Gr. Gesch.* II², pp. 154ff.

think his arguments, based on the absurdity of Pausanias' petition for the Great King's daughter as a wife, are necessarily valid. Pausanias could well have made such a request, regardless of the chances of it being granted, and the reply of Xerxes did not specifically mention the daughter. Nevertheless, there is much in the story that is hard to accept, and Beloch did well to show that Herodotus (5.32) knew an alternate version of the story which he did not seem to believe (εἰ δὴ ἀληθής γ' ἐστι ὁ λόγος). A more serious objection to the letters is the difficulty of explaining just how Thucydides managed to see them. Gomme thought that the use of the word τάδε instead of τοιάδε may indicate that Thucydides was quoting the actual letter word for word.[28] He also pointed out that Beloch's dismissal of the letters as nonsense did not solve the problem. J. M. Balcer, in a more recent article, also rejected the letters and interpreted them as forgeries created by the ephors for the purpose of justifying the sacrilegious death, by starvation, of Pausanias in the sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos.[29]

Pausanias' letter to Artabazus (Thuc. 1.132.5) is interesting from another point of view. It might be argued, by an extreme skeptic, that letters of the type allegedly written and received by leaders such as Pausanias, were actually written by trained scribes who also did the actual reading of letters received. Thus references to Spartans as letter writers are not really evidence of literacy; the writer (or originator) might have been illiterate and dependent entirely upon his scribe.

The present letter is one of the very few that can actually be said to have been written by the hand of the sender; or at least Thucydides probably thought so. The messenger, described only as a man of Argilus and a favorite of Pausanias, was probably a slave just as Gomme thought, but not a Helot.[30]

For reasons now unknown, this man started his last mission with fear and mistrust. Having determined in advance to open the letter, he took the precaution of providing himself with a forged copy of Pausanias' seal. This he did in case Pausanias decided to add or change something in the letter or in case his suspicions proved

[28] A. W. Gomme, et al., *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford 1956), I, p. 432.

[29] J. M. Balcer, "The Medizing of the Regent Pausanias," *Actes du Premier Congrès International des Études Balkaniques et Sud-Est Européennes* (1970), pp. 105-114.

[30] Gomme, *op. cit.*, I, p. 435.

groundless. They were, in fact, well founded. For when he opened the letter and read it, he found an order for his own murder. He then took the letter to the ephors who also read it.

In the absence of proof that the letter was genuine, the focus is on Thucydides' attitude; he believed, or found it possible to believe, that Pausanias the Spartan had, with his own hand, written the letter which contained details far too secret to entrust to the discretion of another.

Explicit specification that any given person actually formed the letters of any composition is understandably rare in literary sources; but many of the papyrus letters from Egypt contain references to the scribe. Sometimes they state that the writing was done for the originator who did not know his letters.

One of the rare literary sources for such specification, alas a foreign source, is the letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Galatians. In the closing section of the letter, Paul took over from his professional secretary: Ἴδετε πηλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί, You see with what big letters I wrote in my own hand (*Gal.* 6.11). Similarly the salutation of the first letter to the Corinthians was in his hand: ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου (16.21). The rest of the letters was written by his scribe and the difference in legibility and writing skill was probably all too apparent to the reader—hence Paul's reference to the awkwardness of his big letters. But the resort to a professional scribe in no way suggests the illiteracy either of Paul or of Pausanias.

More convincing is the following letter quoted by Xenophon. The letter was sent by the admiral Hippocrates to Sparta but was intercepted and brought to Athens.

> Ἔρρει τὰ κᾶλα. Μίνδαρος ἀπεσσύα. Πεινῶντι τὦνδρες. ἀπορίομες τί χρὴ δρᾶν. (*Hell.* 1.1.23)
>
> The ships are lost; Mindarus is dead;
> The men are hungry; we do not know what to do.

It should be noted that most of the difficulties surrounding the letter quoted by Thucydides do not apply to this one. Xenophon could easily have seen the letter since it was intercepted and brought to Athens; the letter has at least one probable Laconian word (ἀπεσσύα); it was written in a style similar to many letters quoted by Plutarch, and thus has all the appearance of genuineness lacking in the letters of Thucydides. The latter have no Laconian forms

whatsoever (although he did use Doric forms in the texts of decrees), and this fact, taken together with other objections, leads me to believe that the letter attributed to Pausanias cannot have been a direct quotation. It could, of course, have been an approximation of a letter believed to have been written by Pausanias.

The letter from the ephors to Pausanias (1.131.1) was sent by means of the Spartan messenger staff but, curiously, the letter quoted by Xenophon was not so sent or, if it was, the device was a complete failure in this instance. This device was widely used by the Spartans and was mentioned by Aristophanes (*Lys.* 991), a reference important not for the information it gives about the *skytale*, but because it shows that Aristophanes could trust the audience to understand the Spartan practice behind the joke. It was commonly believed that the Spartans sent letters by this means. Still earlier, we find a reference to the device in Pindar (*Ol.* 6.91). In this ode Pindar referred to the chorus leader as his message staff of the muses (σκυτάλα Μοισᾶν). Farnell suggested that the poet entrusted the chorus leader with his manuscript, perhaps for the purpose of carrying the composition to Syracuse.[31] Pindar said nothing about the Spartan connection with the *skytale* but he did show an awareness of its existence and common use.

Plutarch described the Spartan practice in detail.

> Ἔστι δὲ ἡ σκυτάλη τοιοῦτον. ἐπὰν ἐκπέμπωσι ναύαρχον ἢ στρατηγὸν οἱ ἔφοροι, ξύλα δύο στρογγύλα μῆκος καὶ πάχος ἀκριβῶς ἀπισώσαντες, ὥστε ταῖς τομαῖς ἐφαρμόζειν πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὸ μὲν αὐτοὶ φυλάττουσι, θάτερον δὲ τῷ πεμπομένῳ διδόασι. ταῦτα δὲ τὰ ξύλα σκυτάλας καλοῦσιν. ὅταν οὖν ἀπόρρητόν τι καὶ μέγα φράσαι βουληθῶσι, βιβλίον ὥσπερ ἱμάντα μακρὸν καὶ στενὸν ποιοῦντες περιελίττουσι τὴν παρ' αὐτοῖς σκυτάλην, οὐδὲν διάλειμμα ποιοῦντες, ἀλλὰ πανταχόθεν κύκλῳ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτῆς τῷ βιβλίῳ καταλαμβάνοντες. τοῦτο δὲ ποιήσαντες ἃ βούλονται καταγράφουσι εἰς τὸ βιβλίον, ὥσπερ ἐστὶ τῇ σκυτάλῃ περικείμενον· ὅταν δὲ γράψωσιν, ἀφελόντες τὸ βιβλίον ἄνευ τοῦ ξύλου πρὸς τὸν στρατηγὸν ἀποστέλλουσι. δεξάμενος δὲ ἐκεῖνος ἄλλως μὲν οὐδὲν ἀναλέξασθαι δύναται τῶν γραμμάτων συναφὴν οὐκ ἐχόντων, ἀλλὰ διεσπασμένων, τὴν δὲ παρ' αὑτῷ σκυτάλην λαβὼν τὸ τμῆμα τοῦ βιβλίου περὶ αὐτὴν περιέτεινεν, ὥστε, τῆς ἕλικος εἰς τάξιν ὁμοίως ἀποκαθισταμένης, ἐπιβάλλοντα τοῖς πρώτοις τὰ δεύτερα, κύκλῳ τὴν ὄψιν ἐπάγειν τὸ συνεχὲς ἀνευρίσκουσαν. καλεῖται δὲ ὁμωνύμως τῷ ξύλῳ σκυτάλη τὸ βιβλίον, ὡς τῷ μετροῦντι τὸ μετρούμενον. (*Lys.* 19.5)

[31] L. R. Farnell, *Pindar; A Commentary* (Amsterdam 1965), p. 48.

> The following is a description of the *skytale*. Whenever the ephors send out an admiral or general, they first fashion two pieces of wood so that they are exactly equal in length and thickness. They keep one and give the other to the man being sent out. They call these pieces of wood σκυτάλαι. Whenever they wish to send some very important and secret message, they prepare a papyrus (βιβλίον) in the shape of a leather strip, long and narrow. They then wrap the *skytale* with this strip of papyrus, being careful to cover the entire surface and to leave no gaps. Having done this, they write whatever they wish on the papyrus just as it is shaped around the *skytale*. After they have written the message they remove the papyrus and send it, without the wood, to the general. He, after receiving the message and having no other means of reading the letters in their now confused order, wraps the papyrus around his own *skytale*. The result is that, after the exact shape of the rolled papyrus has been restored, the letters are once again in their proper sequence and the message can be read. The papyrus is also called *skytale* being named after the wood just as anything that is measured may be named after the measure.

Doubtless the device was used by other Greeks in earlier times; we first hear of it in Archilochus as quoted by the scholiast to Pindar (*Ol.* 5.91): ὡς καὶ ἐν τοῖς 'Αρχιλόχου ὑπομνήμασιν εἴρηται ἀχνυμένη σκυτάλη.

Aristotle, in his *Constitution of Ithaca* said that it was used by others: ἐχρῶντο δ' αὐτῷ καὶ ἄλλοι ὡς 'Αριστοτέλης ἐν τῆι 'Ιθακησίων πολιτείαι μβ (*FGrHist.* 595,F5). Other Greeks probably discontinued the practice since it was impractical for long dispatches, or ineffective for short ones because of the ease of reconstruction. But the tradition-bound Spartans, who may have used it originally as a type of identification device for soldiers in the late seventh century (*supra* p. 18), continued using it with the result that it was practically identified with the city by the fifth century B.C.

Sometimes the word seems to have referred to a written document rather than to the staff with strip of leather or papyrus. Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.3.8) related the story of Cinadon (the conspirator) who was sent in pursuit of certain Aulonians and Helots whose names were written in a *skytale*. The document was given directly by the ephors to the man entrusted with the mission; there was no intermediary who might have been robbed or who might have read the message himself.

The Spartans also used the *skytale* for other purposes, and Dioscourides (the author of the *Nomima*, *FGrHist.* 594,F3) said that

it was used by Spartan moneylenders for business purposes. Depending upon the identity of this Dioscourides (*infra* p. 70ff. and 77f.), the use of the device by the moneylenders might have been as early as the fourth century or as late as the first century B.C.

The term was also frequently used of the staff carried about by young Spartiates and imitated by their fashionable Athenian counterparts (Ar. *Av.* 1280-83).

7. *The Ownership of Books in Sparta*

At first sight the most important of the fourth century writers, Plato and Isocrates, appear to agree with the anonymous author of the Δίσσοι Λόγοι (*fin. s. v a.*) that the Spartans were illiterate and that they could not even count.

In *Hippias Maior* (284-285) Socrates led the sophist through a discussion of the educational value of his teaching methods and humorously suggested that the training offered by Hippias would, almost of necessity, be better for Spartan youth than that which they received from their fathers. Hippias readily acknowledged the truth of the proposition, not realizing its irony. He then complained that the Spartans would not even tolerate lectures on the stars and other celestial phenomena. Not only did they not tolerate such lectures, they would not have understood them anyway, since many Spartans could not even count. They were not interested in grammatical studies either, but they did have a keen interest in hearing lectures on ancient history.

The statement made by Hippias that the Spartans could not even count, might be understood as evidence of a general condition of illiteracy and very low educational level in Sparta. But it is important to consider the full context of irony into which the entire scene is cast. Plato was not making a serious statement about the ignorance of the Spartans; he was being playful with the sophist and his dubious educational methods. Hippias was astonished because the Spartans did not appreciate his talents. These remarks on Spartan education should be understood for what they are, good humour at the expense of Hippias. Even the sophist himself qualified his remark about the Spartans' ability to count and thus admitted that he was exaggerating:

> οὐδαμῶς ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἀριθμεῖν ἐκείνωνγε ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν πολλοὶ ἐπίστανται.

> Absolutely not! Since many of them, *as one might say*, do not even know how to count.

Far more serious and relevant for the question of literacy in Sparta is *Leges* 680 C-D. Here there is no indication that Plato was being ironic, and no hint that any participant meant anything other than what he actually said. Clinias, in reply to a quotation from Homer by the Athenian stranger, said that the Cretans had read (διεληλύθαμεν) some of Homer's verses and even some of other poets, but in general, they did not have much use for foreign poetry. At this point Megillus the Lacedaemonian broke in and said that the Spartans read (χρώμεθα) foreign poetry often and considered Homer the best of them all:

> Ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ χρώμεθα μὲν καὶ ἔοικέν γε κρατεῖν τῶν τοιούτων ποιητῶν.

While it is true that these lines probably refer to oral recitations of poetry, it is also true that they refute Plutarch's allegation that foreign teachers and literature were prohibited in Sparta. That there was a tradition claiming the existence of written copies of Homer in Sparta, is shown by Plutarch himself in *Lycurgus* 4.4, where he said that, while in Asia, Lycurgus became acquainted with Homer and that he eagerly copied and edited the poems so that he could take them to Sparta (ἐγράψατο προθύμως καὶ συνήγαγεν).

Plato's testimony is that of an outsider which, while not necessarily an accurate account of Spartan habits, was an expression of contemporary attitudes. Their interest in music and poetry was well known to everyone, but Pratinas expressed it most succinctly when he compared the Spartan to a cicada always ready for a chorus: Λάκων ὁ τέττιξ εὔτυκος εἰς χορόν (*P.L.G.* 3 p. 559; Athen. 633).

The tradition was still strong in the second century as we learn from Sosibius the grammarian (*FGrHist.* 595,F5) who said that, at a certain festival (the Parparonia), choruses of men danced and sang the songs of Thaletas and Alcman, and the paeans of Dionysodotus the Lacedaemonian. Choruses of Spartan youth also danced and sang the songs of local poets in the festival called the Hyacinthia according to Polycrates (*FGrHist.* 588,F1). Still later we have the word of Athenaeus that the Spartans, even in his day, continued to preserve the ancient songs and that they were very strict concerning correctness and authenticity:

τηροῦσιν δὲ καὶ νῦν τὰς ἀρχαίας ᾠδὰς ἐπιμελῶς πολυμαθεῖς τε εἰς ταύτας εἰσὶ καὶ ἀκριβεῖς. (Athen. 633)

Even to this day they preserve, very carefully, their ancient songs and they are very learned and exacting in these songs.

In this passage Athenaeus was speaking chiefly of the benefits of music, but he must have intended the reader to infer that he meant both music and words. Since the verb τηροῦσιν can mean either to keep something in a physical sense or in the sense of keeping a tradition, or the peace, it is not possible to use the text as a strict proof that written copies of the poems were kept by the Spartans. And yet, it is difficult to see how reliable and authoritative versions of the songs could have been kept for so long otherwise. Indeed it seems almost certain that official texts of the most important poets must have existed from a fairly early date. The Spartan ambassadors who, when arguing their case in Rome, referred to their city's annals and poets may well have been referring to such a collection (*supra* p. 22). If so, written texts existed by the fourth century, but they were probably much earlier. Tigerstedt recently argued that the book written by King Pausanias (*infra* p. 52) was, in part, a publication of the Great Rhetra and of Tyrtaeus' Eunomia.[32] If so, this would suggest that the poetry of Tyrtaeus (and perhaps others as well) was a part of the city chronicles.

Finally it may be noted that an inscription of the sixth century B.C. uncovered during the British excavations of 1927-28, preserves a metrical dedication to Athena. It was described by A. M. Woodward as a hymn composed, perhaps, by a notable poet such as Alcman or Gitiadas (who was also the architect of the temple of Athena Chalkioikos).[33] None of the above is to suggest, of course, that any or all of the youth could read the poems in question, but it does demonstrate the existence, in Sparta, of a long tradition of written texts of such songs.

Isocrates, on the other hand, appears to have been entirely skeptical about the literacy of the Spartans. He said more on the

[32] E. N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*, 2 vols. (Lund 1965), vol. 1, p. 111.

[33] A. M. Woodward, *BSA* 29 (1927-28), p. 45, nr. 69. Pausanias (3.17) said that Gitiadas was architect of the sanctuary and that he wrote and dedicated a hymn to Athena. Jeffery, *op. cit.*, p. 199, thought that the inscription was a victory dedication by an athlete.

subject than Plato, and all of his testimony is negative. The important questions concerning Isocrates, though, are: How seriously should we take him? Did he really mean exactly what he said at all times?

In *Panathenaicus* 209, Isocrates claimed that the Spartans were even more backward than the barbarians, and that they did not even know how to read and write (οὐδε γράμματα μανθάνουσι). This is so obviously an exaggeration that it should not be taken literally as evidence for illiteracy in Sparta even if there were no contradictory evidence at all.

It may often happen that a reader searching for small clues in a great variety of writings might, in his quest, pass too quickly over the entire context of a relevant passage or even ignore it completely. In the case of the present passage from Isocrates, comprehension of the entire speech is the key to proper interpretation. The remark about Spartan illiteracy was made by Isocrates in reply to a student who had been defending the Spartans against previous accusations that their manner of education made them overly aggressive and untrustworthy allies. A few days after this exchange between student and teacher, the latter began to have second thoughts about the speech. Isocrates then stated that he had read and studied the speech carefully and that he was not troubled by what he had written about Athens, but that he was very disturbed by what he had said about the Spartans. He added that he was several times on the point of blotting out or burning the entire speech (232).

At this point Isocrates called back the students who had heard the speech before, with the intention of seeking their advice as to whether or not he should destroy it. The speech was then read aloud and applauded by all except the original dissenter. After some hesitation, the latter delivered a rather long speech of his own in which he was more successful than before in defending the Spartans. This success he achieved by a very complex trick of sophistry which explained Isocrates' censure of the Spartans as, in reality, concealed praise. He claimed that Isocrates' secret purpose was to avoid offending anti-Spartan sentiment in Athens, and then went on to show that Isocrates had been very clever in using words of double meaning in the speech, thus satisfying everyone and offending no one (ζητῶν δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα ῥαδίως εὑρεῖν λόγους ἀμφιβόλους...240). The student continued by recommending that Isocrates make full disclosure of the meanings of his writings about

the Spartans, some of which were just and fair, but much of which was harsh and spiteful. He then said that the Spartans would hate Isocrates if anyone showed them (εἴ τις ἐπέδειξεν αὐτοῖς) these speeches before he had a chance to explain them (πρὶν ἐμὲ διαλεχθῆναι). Nevertheless, he continued, the most intelligent of them owned copies of and admired some of Isocrates' speeches; if they had someone to read them, and if they then had time for study among themselves, they would not fail to understand them (ἢν λάβωσι τὸν ἀναγνωσόμενον ... οὐδὲν ἀγνοήσειν τῶν λεγομένων· 251).

Does this passage really mean, as it seems at first sight, that the most intelligent of the Spartans had private copies of some of Isocrates' speeches but were too illiterate to read them? As often in Greek, this passage is capable of more than one interpretation. The key words here seem to be ἐπέδειξεν, διαλεχθῆναι, and τὸν ἀναγνωσόμενον. *LSJ* provide numerous examples in which ἐπέδειξεν has the meaning "give a public recitation" and it could well have that meaning here. But it could equally well refer to an actual display of a written speech. The phrase ἢν λάβωσι τὸν ἀναγνωσόμενον is somewhat more difficult since the word ἀναγιγνώσκειν nearly always means "to read." But common sense seems to suggest a different meaning here, since the words ἢν λάβωσι would otherwise suggest that only a person capable of reading was required for appreciation of the speech, but that none existed at the time in all of Sparta. It might also be suggested that the words refer to a slave (ἀναγνώστης) specially trained to be a reader as in Cicero (*Att.* 1.12), Plutarch (*Crass.* 2), or as in *IG* V 1, 209 (*s. I a.*) where the reader was a member of some religious cult. Such a reader would read aloud for his masters (or others) in order that they might study together as a group and perhaps save their eyesight as well. This would be a neutral interpretation as far as the question of literacy is concerned. But this seems unlikely too, since such a slave could have been procured easily enough if needed. The words in the present passage seem to have referred to an oral reading, augmented by appropriate commentary, as if the reader were conducting a seminar or study group. An actual example of such recitations in Sparta exists. The constitution written by Dicaearchus and required by law to be read annually to the youth of the city (*infra* p. 66), was probably intended to instill, in them, the current values of their society. Success of this kind of educational activity, generally intended to encourage correct social attitudes, is often

most readily achieved under close supervision; hence the public reading at the ephors' hall. Perhaps this was accompanied by official explanations of the type favored by Isocrates' student.

Thus I have interpreted Isocrates' words τὸν ἀναγνωσόμενον to mean "explain." In any case, the words πρὶν ἐμὲ διαλεχθῆναι and τὸν ἀναγνωσόμενον seem to have the same meaning; only the emphasis is different. With this properly understood the student's remarks in section 250 can be more easily interpreted, and it is not necessary to suppose that he meant that the most intelligent of the Spartans had copies of literary works they were unable to read because of illiteracy. In fact it would be hard to imagine a more absurd situation.

Understood in this way, the assertion that many of the Spartans were eager to read and to study the books of Isocrates (αἴτιον δ' εἶναι καὶ τοῦ πολλοὺς ποθεῖν ἀναγνῶναι καὶ διελθεῖν αὐτάς), is not difficult to accept and is not in conflict with any previous statement of this speaker. In short, the student believed that the Spartans had the books and that they were able to read them; they were even eager to do so. They did, however, need an interpreter (the student) in order avoid misunderstandings of the subtle double meanings which the speaker saw concealed beneath the surface of the speech.

The student ended his own speech at section 264 and was greeted with the unanimous applause of all present, including Isocrates himself, who conceded the point.

There is not much information in this speech concerning the specific details of Spartan education or reading ability, nor should we expect any. But there is no evidence at all of illiteracy as a general condition among the Spartans. Isocrates' speech, if taken seriously,[34] supports the sensible and reasonable proposition that many of the Spartans could read and write well enough to conduct political affairs, and perhaps to collect and make use of written works such as these speeches.

When carefully read, the sources of the fifth century agree on this point, with the single exception of the anonymous Δίσσοι Λόγοι which states that the Spartans not only were illiterate, but that they were proud of the fact that they did not teach their children music or letters.

[34] There may be a good deal of ironic humour in this part of the speech.

> καὶ [τοῖς μὲν] τὼς παῖδας μὴ μανθάνειν μωσικὰ καὶ γράμματα καλὸν Ἴωσι δ' αἰσχρὸν μὴ ἐπίστασθαι ταῦτα πάντα. (2.10)
>
> Among them (the Spartans) it is considered a good thing for their children not to learn music or letters; but among the Ionians it is a disgrace to be ignorant of any of these things.

This statement does not seem to be ambiguous in any way. It was meant to be taken literally, but the weight of the other evidence is heavily against it. The statement is obviously wrong in respect to music, since Pindar (*O.C.T.* F. 189) Plutarch (*Lyc.* 21) and other authorities clearly show that the Spartans had a high regard for musical training and that it was an integral part of their education. Chamaeleon of Heracleia (*fin. s. iv a.*) went so far as to say that all Lacedaemonians learned to play the flute.

> Χαμαιλέων γοῦν ὁ Ἡρακλεώτης ἐν τῶι ἐπιγραφομένωι Προτρεπτικῶι Λακεδαιμονίους φησί καὶ Θηβαίους πάντας αὐλεῖν μανθάνειν. (Diehls F. 88A15)

This must have been the result of a long tradition extending from the time of Tyrtaeus, but does not, of course, suggest that their creative capacity continued in an undiminished line.

8. *Anecdotes*

Anecdotal material, though very difficult to evaluate as evidence, is abundant for Sparta; they liked hearing and telling stories about themselves. Perhaps they even believed most of them. Some are so improbable that no one can take them seriously for their supposed factual content, and yet they are sometimes suggestive in other respects. For example, the story recorded by Plutarch in *Moralia* 214F, of Agesilaus giving encouragement to his troops by writing the word NIKH backward on his hand and then transferring the writing to the liver of a sacrificial animal, does not inspire much belief (a similar story is related by Frontinus [*Str.* 1.11.14] about Alexander). Nevertheless, it might well reflect something of the attitudes of other Greeks concerning the Spartans; no ancient person who believed the story could think of them as illiterate. Another, more probable (or more possible), example is the story of the exile Demaratus the son of Ariston, who, upon hearing of the proposed march of Xerxes, desired to send word to Sparta. To avoid detection, he scraped the wax from a double tablet and wrote his message directly on the wooden undersurface.

> δελτίον δίπτυχον λαβὼν τὸν κηρὸν αὐτοῦ ἐξέκνησε, καὶ ἔπειτα ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ τοῦ δελτίου ἔγραψε τὴν βασιλέος γνώμην . . . (Hdt. 7.239)
>
> Taking a double tablet, he scratched off the wax coating and then, on the wooden surface of the tablet, wrote the king's plans.

Upon its arrival in Sparta, the Spartans could not guess its meaning until Gorgo, the daughter of Cleomenes and wife of Leonidas, told them to scrape away the new wax. They did as she told them; read the message, and sent copies to other Greek cities.

If this story has any credibility at all, it is obvious that Demaratus and all other participants could write and that they made regular use of writing.

Another interesting example is the story of Dieneces the Spartiate whom Herodotus called the bravest of the three hundred with Leonidas at Thermopylae. Dieneces, after being informed, by a man of Trachis, that the Persians were so numerous that their arrows blotted out the light of the sun, replied that this was good news indeed since they would be able to fight in the shade. Herodotus added that many other such stories were left behind as a memorial for him: ταῦτα μὲν καὶ ἄλλα τοιουτότροπα ἔπεα φασὶ Διηνέκεα τὸν Λακεδαιμόνιον λιπέσθαι μνημόσυνα (Hdt. 7.226). Centuries later, Plutarch (*Mor.* 225B) found a version of the story which attributed the saying to Leonidas.

The essential question suggested by this story is Where did Herodotus learn it? What did he mean when he said that this story and others like it were left behind as a memorial for Dieneces? Was the reference merely to stories handed down orally? Or was some more permanent (written) version of these important events already in existence? No more than two generations separated the deeds from Herodotus' report, making it easily possible for him to have gotten it orally; moreover the power of the oral tradition was quite capable of preserving such memories for much longer periods. On the other hand, the written records of oracles, the ephor lists, and similar materials suggest that the Spartans attached considerable importance to written collections of important documents and that they considered them more permanent. From the period in question we might compare their inscribed monuments for the men who died at Thermopylae (Hdt. 7.228); we might also suspect that the names of the three hundred Spartiates learned by Herodotus were written in some public place. In the private

sector we have the well known inscription of Damonon (*IG* V 1, 213) who was unwilling to trust the deeds of his family to oral tradition; in like manner, Pausanias was eager to put his achievement at Plataea in writing (Thuc. 1.131). Tigerstedt, who considered the mid-third century the most probable time for the creation of the collection of apothegms, thought that a written source from Sparta was almost out of the question. Discussing the sayings related to Leonidas and the foreign influence on them, he wrote "that the histories were not recorded in Sparta itself is tolerably certain, because of Spartan illiteracy." [35] He also suggested that if a "proto-collection" existed in the fifth century, "it must have been made either by a sophist or by a Laconizer, influenced by the sophists, e.g. men like Hippias or Critias." [36] This seems to mean that the supposed proto-copy must have been written in Athens because the Spartans themselves could not write.

The question of what Herodotus heard and saw (or was allowed to see) in Sparta is a difficult one, probably insoluble. But perhaps some allowance should be made for the possibility that written versions of anecdotes, such as the preceding examples, existed in Sparta by the time of Herodotus' visit. It seems all but certain that, in spite of their traditional reputation for illiteracy, some Spartans were capable of committing such stories to writing. The sayings were simple; little organizational or narrative skill would have been required from the recorder. But these are the skills, necessary for any kind of imaginative or interpretive writing, which the Spartans seemed to have lacked completely. In short, their problem was not so much an inability to write, as an inability to make proper use of their written and oral traditions for larger purposes (*infra* p. 62). But even though the ability to write such tales is not evidence that they did, neither is their supposed illiteracy evidence that they did not.

---

[35] Tigerstedt, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 28.
[36] Tigerstedt, *ibid.*, p. 30.

CHAPTER THREE

MINOR WRITERS WHO WERE LACEDAEMONIANS

Jacoby has long since noted the great abundance of mythological and historical material available to ancient writers interested in Sparta. Indeed, Herodotus, the first to make extensive use of it, seems to have known as much about Sparta as he did about Athens. Perhaps, as Jacoby said, he knew rather more about Lycurgus than about Solon.

That this was actually the case, can hardly be doubted. The astonishing thing is the small part played by the Spartans in the study and publication of their own history. But the existence, in Sparta, of persons who could be described as 'historians' or 'scholars' (perhaps one should be content merely to call them writers), has obvious significance for the question of literacy in the city.

I do not include the great Melic poets of an earlier age, whose nationality is questionable anyway. Moreover, their work does not necessarily provide evidence for literacy among the population. Their songs were for public or private performance by trained singers and chorus. They also served the practical purpose of marching songs for Spartan soldiers.

Apart from the poets, the first known local writers in Sparta made their appearance at the very beginning of the fourth century. There were three of them at the beginning, all contemporaries. Two of them were personal rivals and possibly enemies; it is probable that all three knew each other.

Lysander (*FGrHist.* 583), one of the most ambitious and successful Spartans of his generation, was widely known to have been in possession of some type of subversive literature.

The circumstances surrounding the discovery of this material are interesting and relevant for the question of public documents in Sparta. King Agesilaus, shortly after the death of Lysander in 395, went to the general's house in search of documents relating to a treaty which had come into dispute. During the search, he found a book which contained a speech relating to the Spartan constitution.

> χρόνῳ ὕστερον Ἔφορός φησιν, ἀντιλογίας τινὸς συμμαχικῆς ἐν Σπάρτῃ γενομένης, καὶ τὰ γράμματα διασκέψασθαι δεῆσαν ἃ παρ'

> ἑαυτῷ κατέσχεν ὁ Λύσανδρος, ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν Ἀγησίλαον. εὑρόντα δὲ τὸ βιβλίον, ἐν ᾧ γεγραμμένος ἦν ὁ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας λόγος .... (Plut. *Lys.* 30.3)

> Later, Ephorus says, when a dispute arose in Sparta concerning a certain treaty and it became necessary to examine the written documents which Lysander kept in his own possession, Agesilaus went to his house. He found there a book in which was written a speech on the constitution....

Plutarch also said that the speech had been written for Lysander by Cleon of Halicarnassus, and that Lysander planned to use it to win the people over to his side.

> πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ἐπεχείρησε καὶ παρεσκευάσατο πείθειν δι' ἑαυτοῦ τοὺς πολίτας, καὶ λόγον ἐξεμελέτα πρὸς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν γεγραμμένον ὑπὸ Κλέωνος τοῦ Ἁλικαρνασσέως. (Plut. *Lys.* 25)

> First of all he set about and prepared himself to convince the citizens through his own efforts; he even studied (or memorized?) a speech written on the subject (of the constitution) by Cleon of Halicarnassus.

In *Moralia* 212C, Plutarch told the story in similar terms, saying that Agesilaus had read Cleon's speech which had been left behind in a book. C. Nepos also knew the story and named Cleon as the author: hanc ei scripsisse Cleon Halicarnassius dicitur (6.3.5).

Diodorus merely said that the speech had been found; he didn't give the author's name: εὗρον λόγον γεγραμμένον πολυτελῶς (14.13.2).

Plutarch wrote another account, which appears to be a variant, in which Lysander himself was named as author: εὗρε δὲ καὶ βιβλίον γεγραμμένον τῷ Λυσάνδρῳ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας (*Mor.* 229F).

Questions which come to mind here are: What did Plutarch (or Ephorus) mean by the word βιβλίον? Was it nothing but an ordinary book used, perhaps, as a synonym for λόγος = speech? Did Plutarch intend to specify that the book was some kind of collection, of which the speech by Cleon merely formed a part? Other likely items in such a collection might have been the oracles collected and edited (or forged?) by Lysander: λόγια πυθόχρηστα καὶ χρησμοὺς συνετίθει καὶ κατεσκεύαζεν (*Lys.* 25.2) and perhaps, even the documents sought by Agesilaus.

This interpretation would eliminate the apparent contradiction in *Moralia* 229F. Lysander did not write the speech or book in question. He did, however, collect and edit such materials.

Naturally there is much uncertainty about the contents of the book or speech. In general, ancient authorities were in agreement that Lysander wanted to modify the traditional manner of royal succession in Sparta. But there were differences of opinion regarding his actual proposals. Some thought that he wanted to take the hereditary kingship from the two royal families and open it to all descendants of Heracles, while others said that he wanted to open it to all Spartiates without regard to family.

> καὶ διανοεῖτο τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκ τῶν δυεῖν οἴκων μεταστήσας εἰς κοινὸν ἀποδοῦναι πᾶσιν Ἡρακλείδαις, ὡς δ' ἔνιοί φασιν, οὐχ Ἡρακλείδαις ἀλλὰ Σπαρτιάταις .... (Plut. *Lys.* 24.5)
>
> And he intended to take away the kingship from the two royal houses and to turn it over, as a common possession, to all of the Heraclids; but some say that he intended to give it to all Spartiates and not to the Heraclids only.

Ephorus (*Lys.* 30.4) was one of those who thought it was to be open to all: ...εἰς μέσον θεῖναι, καὶ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν αἵρεσιν ἐκ τῶν ἀρίστων (Plut. *Lys.* 30.4). But consideration of Lysander's ancestry —he was a Heraclid, but not of the royal line—suggests the correct interpretation, as Jacoby also noted.

Lysander was the only one of these three writers whose intentions seem relatively clear. The purpose of his 'writings' had nothing to do with his two contemporaries. Lysander's motives were entirely personal (selfish); the speech was for oral presentation before his fellow citizens and the forged oracles were intended for the same audience.

Pausanias (*FGrHist.* 582), the Agiad king, had a curious career which ended in his death as an exile sometime after 395. Like his grandfather, he seems to have been in frequent conflict with the ephors. Aristotle said that he attempted to overthrow them.

> ὥσπερ ἐν Λακεδαίμονί φασι Λύσανδρόν τινες ἐπιχειρῆσαι καταλῦσαι τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ Παυσανίαν τὸν βασιλέα τὴν ἐφορείαν (*Pol.* 1333b 29)
>
> In Lacedaemon some say that Lysander attempted to overthrow the kingship and that Pausanias tried to overthrow the ephorate.

In 395, Lysander, about to engage the Thebans in battle at Haliartus, sent a letter to Pausanias who was waiting, with his army, at Plataea. The letter, requesting the immediate aid of

Pausanias, was intercepted and taken to Thebes. Perhaps it was another example of the failure of the Spartan *skytale* to keep its' secret. As a result, Pausanias arrived too late to save Lysander or even to join the battle. After recovering the Spartan dead, under truce, he returned home where he was tried and condemned to death. Wisely avoiding his own trial, Pausanias escaped to Tegea where he died in exile. In Tegea, he wrote his book.

> ἐν τῇ φυγῇ συντάξαι λό<γον> κατὰ τῶν <Λ>υ<κούρ>γου νόμων ὄντος τῆς ἐκβαλλούσης οἰκίας, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοὺς χρησμοὺς λέγει τοὺς δοθέντας αὐτῷ. (Strabo 8.5, p. 366) = Ephorus 70 F118)
>
> In his exile, Pausanias compiled his work against the laws of Lycurgus, a member of the family that had expelled him from Sparta; in this book he also revealed the oracles that had been given to him (Lycurgus).

No fragments of the book survive and inferences regarding its probable contents or purpose are very uncertain. Jacoby warned against the easiest assumption—that Pausanias wrote something intended to gain favour with the authorities in Sparta.[1] Perhaps there was no practical purpose at all; the book was simply an attempt to justify his own life.

But, given Pausanias' somewhat radical nature, it seems more likely to have been a final attack (from a safe distance) on both the ephors and the other royal house.

Jacoby suggested that Tyrtaeus might have been the prime source for this book; in which case, Pausanias would have been the first Spartan to make such extensive use of the poet as a historical source. According to Tigerstedt, this amounted to the publication of the Great Rhetra directly from the royal archives.[2]

Another possible source for the book were the oracles mentioned by Strabo. The reference, even though corrupt, was probably to the collections known to have been kept in the houses of the Spartan kings. By some means, Pausanias must have taken the oracles, including the rhetra, from his own house to his place of exile in Tegea.

Details of the book's circulation and preservation are, of course,

---

[1] F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden 1955), vol. 3b commentary, p. 618.

[2] Tigerstedt, *op. cit.*, I, p. 54.

totally lacking. But it was known to Aristotle and perhaps to the ephors in Sparta. It is also possible that Thibron knew of it in his period of exile. If so, its' dissemination was both broad and swift.

THIBRON (*FGrHist.* 581) is a very little known writer except that he was quoted by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1333b 5) as a Spartan authority. He had a military command in Asia Minor ca. 400 B.C. and was condemned to exile ca. 399-92. He received a new Asian command in ca. 391 and probably died the same year.

The contents of his book are even less well known than his life, but the single citation, by Aristotle, shows that Lycurgus and the Spartan educational system were praised as the foundation of the contemporary Spartan hegemony.

His purpose in writing such a book is completely unknown, but Jacoby suggested several interesting possibilities. He may have written the book to advertise or recommend the Spartan state to the rulers of Asia Minor. Another possibility is that he wrote it in exile intending to show that the ephors (who had exiled him), were themselves not a proper part of the Lycurgan constitution. On the other hand, he might have written, perhaps as a reply to Pausanias' attack, a book designed to regain the favor of Spartan authorities (by defending and praising them).

The entire activity of these three men, the first writers known from Sparta, occupied a very short period of time near the beginning of the fourth century. Their insignificant work can scarcely be called more than political tracts; two of these, written by exiles were, perhaps, mere temperamental outbursts against their persecutors. The other, written by a foreigner for the selfserving interests of Lysander, was only a speech to be memorized. Whether or not any of these writings played any role in later disputes over the relative merits of different types of constitutions, is impossible to say. But it does not seem that Aristotle made a very serious use of Thibron's constitution. The single citation was made for the purpose of condemning the simplistic attitudes of all such writers towards the realities of political and military power.

These works, unimpressive as they are, constituted the sum total of Spartan literary efforts in the fifth and fourth centuries. So far as is known, they had no predecessors. No successor appeared for nearly two hundred years.

Thus, following the death of Thibron, not a single writer from

Sparta is known, even by name, until the end of the third century.

SOSILUS (*FGrHist.* 176), was a Laconian (fl. ca. 218) and was said by C. Nepos (*Hann.* 13.3) to have accompanied Hannibal on some of his military campaigns. He wrote a record of the general's deeds, in seven books, which was used by Polybius, who said that Sosilus might better be characterized as a common gossip than as a historian (3.20.5). There is no indication that he did any work in Sparta or that he wrote on any Spartan subject.

SOSIBIUS THE GRAMMARIAN (*FGrHist.* 595) was really the first Spartan who could rightly be called an important writer.

A good deal of confusion has long existed regarding the identity of this author. There were several others who bore this rather common name and who might easily be confused with each other.

A Sosibius was celebrated by Callimachus in an elegiac victory ode (Pfeiffer, F. 384).[3] By the time of Athenaeus, this Sosibius was thought by many to have been the author of a treatise on monarchy which was dedicated to Cassander. Athenaeus cited Theophrastus as the author.

Sosibius the problem solver (ὁ θαυμάσιος λυτικὸς Σωσίβιος) was said by Athenaeus (493EF) to have been active in the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus (r.285-247). The Suda identified this individual with the Laconian Grammarian: Σωσίβιος· Λάκων· γραμματικός [[τῶν ἐπιλυκικῶν καλουμένων]].

A Sosibius was also mentioned by Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 28), in relation to Ptolemy Soter (r. 304-283). This man, in his broad travels, saw, in Sinope, a statue which corresponded in every detail, to one seen by the king in a dream. The dream thus received its proper interpretation, but Plutarch did not state that this Sosibius actually went to Ptolemy's court. If he did, he might well have been the problem solver.

The Laconian Sosibius (the grammarian) is almost certainly not to be identified with any of the above. The grammarian's work was of an entirely different nature and dealt exclusively with Sparta. He was also somewhat later than the others since, as Jacoby showed, his chronological study Χρονῶν 'Αναγραφή was written after the 'Ολυμπιονῖκαι of Timaeus (d. after 264), and probably

[3] R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus, Fragmenta* (Oxford 1949), F. 384.

after the definitive work of Eratosthenes (d. 214/213), which established, universally, the dating system based on Pan-Hellenic festivals. In general, Sosibius the Laconian must have been active between the years 250-150 and probably closer to the lower date.

Strangely, G. L. Barber, in his article in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, identified the Laconian with the Sosibius of Ptolemy's court.[4]

No background information concerning Sosibius is available, but somewhere he learned Hellenistic methods of scholarship and was able to apply them to local antiquarian subjects. Little or nothing can be known about his sources, but the Spartan tradition was a rich one and numerous foreigners had already begun its exploitation long before Sosibius. Some of these books might have been in his possession as well as those of Timaeus and Eratosthenes. Jacoby thought that he probably had Aristophanes' definitive text of Alcman for which he wrote the commentary which was in turn used by Apollodorus.

Because of the importance of this author, it seems appropriate to give a short account of some of his major work; titles of individual books are Jacoby's.

1) His book on Chronology ΧΡΟΝΩΝ ΑΝΑΓΡΑΦΗ (F. 1), was not a history in any sense of the word. It was probably a short book intended, as Jacoby suggested, as the ground work for his own later studies, and for other writers interested in Spartan antiquities.

The book contained dates for the fall of Troy (395 years before *Ol.* 1 [1172/71]), a date for Homer (in the eighth year of the Spartan King Charillaus, son of Polydectes (ca. 866), and for the founding of the Carnean festival (*Ol.* 26).

2) A book on sacrifices ΠΕΡΙ ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΛΑΚΕΔΑΙΜΟΝΙ ΘΥΣΙΩΝ Ᾱ? (F. 4-5), probably limited to Spartan cults, contained descriptions of the conduct of such cults, aeteological material, interpretation of cult names, and Laconian words.

From the surviving fragments we learn that the Lacedaemonians, in the festival of Promacheia, crowned themselves. Sosibius specified that those who wore the garlands were the people from the country (non-Spartiates? pre-Dorians?) and that those of the Agoge (the Spartiates) followed in the rear and did not wear garlands. (F. 4; Athen. 674AB).

---

[4] G. L. Barber, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1970), s.v. Sosibius.

We also learn that, in an unnamed festival (the Parparonia—Jacoby), celebrated at the time of the Gymnopaedea, the chorus leaders wore garlands made of palms. These crowns, called ψιλαvoί in Sosibius' day (cf. *IG* V 1, 208.4, 209.24), were formerly called Θυρεατικοί in memory of their victory at Thyrea (ca. 545).

Choruses of men danced naked while singing the songs of Thaletas and Alcman, and the paeans of Dionysodotus the Laconian. (F. 5; Athen. 678BC)

Like the book on chronology, this work probably became a source-book for Sosibius (Jacoby suggested that the anonymous fragments 19, 20, and 22 were from this work) and for other grammarians.

3) His work on Alcman ΠΕΡΙ ΑΛΚΜΑΝΟΣ Ā-Γ̄ (F. 6a, b) originally consisting of at least three books, is now represented by only two short citations by Athenaeus. Both referred to the same entry in Sosibius' book. From these fragments, we learn that κρίβανα were sacrificial cakes made in the shape of female breasts. They were used in womens' festivals and carried when the encomium for the virgin (Artemis) was sung (Athen. 646A, 114F-115A).

If the surviving fragment is any indication of the general contents of the book, it must have been a commentary rather than a biography or new text. It would have been the first extensive commentary on this poet's work.

Jacoby also suggested the possibility that F. 13 (the wounding of Heracles by the sons of Hipocoön), and F. 20 (on Castor and Polydeuces) might have been parts of the commentary.

4) The book on Mimes ΤΩΝ ΜΙΜΗΛΩΝ (?) ΕΝ ΛΑΚΩΝΙΚΗΙ (F. 7), is also represented by a single quotation by Athenaeus. According to the surviving fragment, there was an ancient type of comic entertainment in Laconia which was not taken very seriously by the Spartans. It consisted of actors who would mimic, in a suitable dialect (ἐν εὐτελεῖ τῇ λέξει), someone stealing fruit or perhaps the speech of a foreign doctor. The Lacedaemonians called the participants of the performances δεικηλίσται.

Athenaeus also named others—Italians, Sicyonians, and Thebans, who had similar amusements but different names for them.

It is uncertain how much of this information must be attributed directly to Sosibius and how much Athenaeus may have added from other sources. If Sosibius contributed the facts about the performances given elsewhere, one might infer that the book was

a general treatment of this form of comic drama in many Greek cities. But this seems very uncertain and, in view of his exclusive attention to Sparta in his other works, it might be more likely that this book, too, was limited to the local tradition.

Jacoby raised interesting questions about possible source material for this book.[5] Did Sosibius merely repeat contemporary opinions? Did he have access to an older tradition? Did he simply infer the existence of an older comedy from the Laconian name for the actor? Or did he make use of archaeological material such as the masks from the Orthia shrine?

5) A book on customs ΠΕΡΙ < ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΛΑΚΕΔΑΙΜΟΝΙ > ΕΘΩΝ (F. 8), was probably concerned with religious practices. The single fragment describes the song of a chorus of old men who danced in an unnamed festival singing the words ἀμὲς μὲν ποκ' ἦμες. (Zenob. *Prov.* 1, 82).

6) The book on likenesses 'ΟΜΟΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ (F. 9) was probably a comparison of Spartan and foreign institutions. The single fragment (Athen. 690EF) provides no real clue; it merely gives the Elean word for myrrh (πλαγγόνιον), named for its discoverer.

In addition, there are sixteen fragments from unnamed works. Some of these, as previously mentioned, may have been parts of the books listed by name. In every case, the type of material is in keeping with what one might expect from this author. Five fragments (10, 14, 16, 19, 20) are concerned with cults and temples —or the names thereof; four (11, 12, 18, 24) deal with Laconian names for flowers, trees etc.; five (13, 15, 22, 23, 25) relate to mythological topics; one (21) to genealogy; one (17) has a woman's name.

Perhaps the most important of these unnamed books (if, indeed it was a separate title) might have been a work on the history of music, or dance rhythms, which seems to have been a general treatment of the hyporcheme (F. 23). In the portion of the fragment attributed directly to Sosibius, the claim is made that the hyporcheme was a Cretan song form. It is entirely possible (perhaps probable) that this citation was from the book on Alcman, but proof is lacking.

Molpis (*FGrHist.* 590) was the little known author of a constitution of Sparta. Athenaeus (140AB, 664E) cited him as an authority

[5] Jacoby, *op. cit.*, p. 649.

on Spartan dinners. We learn that the dinner called ἡ κοπίς was a special meal consisting of set courses. The word was considered to be Laconian for δεῖπνον (ἄϊκλον being the general Doric term). Molpis also spoke of the ἐπάϊκλον, called ἡ ματτύη elsewhere. It was an after dinner course contributed sometimes by one Spartan mess-mate, sometimes by more than one. It was intended as a display of the donor's skill and generosity rather than as a luxury.

ARISTOCRATES (*FGrHist.* 591), the son of Hipparchus, was called a Spartiate by Plutarch (*Lyc.* 4.8). He wrote a very extensive work on Laconian curiosities in at least four books (ΛΑΚΟΝΙΚΑ). Jacoby dated him to the time before Pamphilius (*s. I a.*), and considered his work a likely source for Pausanias the Periegete. Aristocrates seems to have used source material not found elsewhere and of an exotic nature. Perhaps other authors, less credulous than he, knew but rejected such material. He was cited by Plutarch (*Lyc.* 4) as the only historian who knew that Lycurgus had gone to Libya, Spain, and India. Plutarch cited him again (*Phil.* 16.4) because of his different account of the return, by Philopoemen, of the exiles to Sparta and of the murder of eighty Spartan citizens. Aristocrates gave the number as 350.

He may also have had interests in the mythical figures of tragedy and comedy if he was the author quoted by the scholiasts for Aristophanes (*Nub.* 971), Sophocles (*Trach.* 266, on the number of Eurytus' children), and by Stephanus Byzantius (on the name of Euboea). The identity of this author with the Spartiate is very uncertain, however, since the name is so common. But, presumably, this kind of material could have had a place in such a large work.

HIPPASUS (*FGrHist.* 589) was dated by Jacoby to the period before Demetrius Magnes (fl. ca. 50 B.C.). Diogenes Laertius (8.84) said that there were two persons named Hippasus, one a Metapontine who left nothing in writing, and the other a Laconian. The latter wrote five books on the Spartan constitution. Diogenes said nothing about the contents of the books and gave no indication of his date. Athenaeus (14DE) quoted him on the subject of amusements. At least part of his book seems to have been concerned with curiosities such as the discovery of various games. The reference was probably to the official ball games in Sparta.

Diophantus (*FHG*. IV, p. 396) was a grammarian said by Fulgentius (*Myth*. 1.1) to have written fourteen books on antiquarian subjects: Diophantus, Lacedaemonum auctor, libros scripsit Antiquitatum quattuordecim." Fulgentius (*Antiq. Interp*. v. nefrendes) also mentioned him as the author of a work on sacrifices: Diophantus Lacedaemonius, qui de sacris deorum scripsit...". Perhaps this was from the same work.

Jacoby did not list the Lacedaemonian, but did list a Diophantus from the Hellenistic period who was the author of a book on the Pontic regions (*FGrHist*. 805). If Diophantus the Laconian is not to be identified with the author of the *Pontica* (which seems unlikely), there is no indication of a date for the the grammarian.

Nicocles the grammarian (*FGrHist*. 587) was quoted by Athenaeus (140C-E) as the author of a work on Spartan antiquities which seems to have contained a collection of miscellanea on the local festivals, communal dinners and similar matters. More details on the ἐπάϊκλα were given. There appears to have been some kind of trial or contest (at the dinner?) presided over by an ephor. The ephor, after hearing all participants, would acquit or convict; the victor then would levy a fine, of cakes or laurel leaves to eat them on, against the loser. Jacoby dated Nicocles to the period before Didymus.

Müller (*FHG*. IV, p. 465), quoting Fabricius, identified him with Nicocles the grammarian (born ca. 310 A.D.): hunc Nicoclem Fabricius eundem esse statuit cum Nicocle Lacone, grammatico, Juliani imperatoris praeceptore, ut tradit Socrates III, 1, p. 165.

Pausanias (*FGrHist*. 592) is known only from an abbreviated entry in the *Suda*. Five titles are listed under his name. Of the five, two (ΛΑΚΩΝΙΚΑ and ΠΕΡΙ ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΛΑΚΩΣΙΝ ΕΟΡΤΩΝ) and possibly a work on chronology (ΧΡΟΝΙΚΑ) were on Laconian subjects. He also wrote books on the Hellespont and the Amphictyons. No actual fragments from this author survive. Jacoby assigned him to the Roman imperial age.

Phaestus (*FGrHist*. 593) was quoted by the scholiast to Pindar (*Pyth*. 4.28), as the author of a work entitled either ΛΑΚΕΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΚΑ or ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΑ. The note, which concerned the oracle of Zeus Ammon in Libya, could have been written by a

Macedonian interested in Alexander or by a Lacedaemonian interested in Lysander. Thus it seems impossible to determine which title is correct and the identity of this author as a Laconian must be regarded as doubtful. Jacoby, also doubtful, assigned him to the Hellenistic period.

The foregoing list of writers known to have been Laconians is, as far as I can ascertain, complete. It is not an impressive list when compared with the number of writers known from Athens or elsewhere, and the accomplishments of these Spartan writers seem to have been slight, perhaps even trivial, by comparison.

It might be argued that other writers existed, but that their names have not been preserved. This approach, tempting at first, fails to satisfy even the most casual inquirer for long. Contemplation of the small number of Spartan writers known to us, suggests the stronger probality—that we know most, if not all, of their names. The break of almost two hundred years (and perhaps a bit more) between the first writers and Sosibius makes a powerful impression.

In a smaller provincial town, this might not be very surprising. But for Sparta, a city full of self-pride, long a military leader in Greece, with many foreign contacts in other parts of the Aegean, much visited by foreign lecturers and writers, and possessor of long traditions, it is very astonishing indeed. The Spartans were keenly interested in themselves and Hippias' claim that he had lectured there and that the Spartans were eager to hear lectures on their own history is believable. They also preserved, orally and in writing, more records and traditions than most Greeks. Moreover, they sometimes recognized a practical need for the knowledge that was contained in these traditions; but they were rarely able to make adequate use of them without outside help. For example, once, when they felt the need to indoctrinate the youth in their ancestral ways, they found it necessary to rely upon the public reading of a constitution of their own city, written by a foreigner (*infra* p. 66). Apparently no local citizen was expected to produce such a work even though a wealth of material was available.

Many explanations might be offered to account for this anomaly. In his discussion of the Laconian Apothegms, published by Plutarch, Tigerstedt said that these sayings could not have been written up

in Sparta because of the illiteracy of the Spartans (*supra* p. 49).

But there is no reason to think that they were illiterate in the absolute sense of the word. King Pausanias, Thibron, and Lysander could write, at least well enough to produce the letters normally connected with Spartan military operations (*infra* p. 94). While it is true that Lysander had a speech written for him by a foreigner, it is also true that he brought to his home, a written copy which he intended to memorize for public delivery. Perhaps his motive in hiring a foreigner to write the speech was similar to that of the earlier votaries who hired professional potters to paint their names on the offerings; they wanted better work than they themselves could produce. Diodorus called the speech πολυτελῶς—well polished (Diod. 14.13).

Jacoby suggested that the explanation was to be found in the nature of the "Lycurgan state" and its requisite stand against foreign cultural and economic influences. Such a state, he said, was not in a position to write its own history, nor did it wish to do so.[6]

More specifically, the Spartan official educational system must lie behind their inability to produce a local literature. In this one respect, every Spartan boy was the same or, at least, was intended to be. The educational system was designed as a leveler of society; it was to teach individuals their place in the whole body and to suppress tendencies toward individualism. Spartans should neither wish for nor even know how to live a private life: τὸ δὲ ὅλον εἴθιζε τοὺς πολίτας μὴ βούλεσθαι μηδὲ ἐπίστασθαι κατ' ἰδίαν ζῆν (Plut. *Lyc.* 25.3). Ideally, citizens should be totally integrated into the state; this was the chief purpose of the common messes and of the regulations governing personal wealth. This attitude can be seen reflected in numerous anecdotes told about the Spartans as, for example, when the ephors fined Terpander and confiscated his instrument because it had an extra string on it (Plut. *Mor.* 238C).

In addition to the constant emphasis on the physical aspects of education, the Spartan boy grew up in an atmosphere in which strict conformity was a virtue and in which the only acceptable areas for the achievement of personal distinction, were war and athletic contests. Extraordinary talents were not encouraged, and people like Lysander and Thibron were obvious exceptions.

As far as writing is concerned, it seems probable that all, or most,

---

[6] Jacoby, *ibid.*, p. 615.

Spartiates who went through the *Agoge*, learned at least a little. Writing was a practical thing which might be useful in certain circumstances (as useful as sharpening a sword perhaps). But writing books merely for the satisfaction of personal interests was a different thing altogether; a suspicious and perhaps dangerous thing.

The Spartan mind, strictly trained in obedience to authority, and adept at short, witty sayings, was probably not capable of such writing. It is almost certainly true, as Jacoby said, that they did not wish to write their own history. But it might be possible to go one step further and suggest that they were not capable even of wishing to do so; they could not wish for what they did not know.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOREIGN WRITERS WHO WENT TO SPARTA

Even though the Spartans seem to have been unable to make proper use of their great wealth of tradition and written records, foreigners were eager to do so. Beginning at least by the fifth century, they went there in a steady stream, although not all of them were able to penetrate the Spartan veil of secrecy.

Herodotus went to Sparta sometime after the middle of the fifth century. His purpose was to gather information in whatever way possible—mostly by word of mouth. This is all but certain since he nowhere mentioned that he had inspected records of any kind, and much of the information about the Spartans is of the type that could have been collected by living informants. An obvious example is his account of his meeting, at Pitana, with Archias the son of Samius (3.55). This Archias was a grandson of the Archias who died in the Spartan attack against Samos three generations earlier. Herodotus must have derived all, or most, of his account of that assault from family traditions remembered by Archias. Another example is his account of the origins of the dual kingship (6.52) where we find the expression Λακεδαιμόνιοι γὰρ ὁμολογέοντες οὐδενὶ ποιητῇ λέγουσι (The Lacedaemonians who agree with none of the poets say...). Similar expressions indicating oral reports are common throughout the history. There are some indications, however, that he made limited use of written records in Sparta as, for example, when he said that he had learned the names of all 300 of the men who died at Thermopylae (7.224). This was probably a reference to the stele set up over the grave of Leonidas in ca. 440 B.C. Pausanias (3.14) also saw it some six centuries later. Herodotus may also have learned something of the Spartan king lists from local sources. But if he saw the records or the collections of oracles kept by the Spartan kings, he did not say so. Conversations with the Pythiasts might have been an adequate source.

Hellanicus (*FGrHist.* 4, F. 85), also a fifth century visitor, was able to do no more than publish the Carnean victory lists "in a

special work which was a kind of musical history of Hellas like the ἀναγραφή of Sikyon."[1] Presumably, the lists were inscribed for public display. Jacoby attributed his failure to produce a constitution of Sparta to the secrecy of local officials.[2] Doubtless it is true that access to the Spartan records was very difficult for foreigners. The inability of Thucydides to obtain the number of Spartan troops at the battle of Mantinea (418 B.C.) is often cited as an example of this secrecy. Pericles, in his speech delivered ca. 432 B.C. (Thuc. 1.144), spoke of the Spartan practice of expelling foreigners from the city; Aristophanes (*Av.* 1013-16) also mentioned it. A foreigner's success in obtaining information in Sparta depended very much on the time of his visit as well as on the type of information being sought. Herodotus seems to have had no trouble in collecting more than enough material for his purposes; Thucydides (if he went there) sought military information in time of war and was unsuccessful. It is not certain that Hellanicus wanted anything other than the victory lists for his music history.

HIPPIAS and other sophists began to make frequent visits to the city by the last part of the fifth century. Hippias, as he said, went there for the purpose of giving public lectures on ancient history and other subjects (Plato *Hp. Ma.* 284-285 and *supra* p. 41). Jacoby suggested that his visit may have been made as a part of a diplomatic mission.[3] In any case, we know little of the visit and cannot assume that he went there with the intention of doing local research along with his lectures. But he and others were probably eager to learn about the manners and customs of this strange city—especially anecdotes and apothegms which might well have had cash value elsewhere.

CRITIAS (Diels, no. 88) seems likely to have gone to Sparta sometime near the end of the fifth century, but his visit is uncertain. He was known as an extreme Spartophile (λαμπρῶς μὲν ἐλακώνισε [Philostr. *V. Soph.* 1.161]) and wrote constitutions of the city in elegiac verses and in prose.

XENOPHON is well known to have gone there early in the fourth

[1] Jacoby, *Atthis, The Local Chronicles of Ancient Athens* (Oxford 1949), p. 59.
[2] Jacoby, *FGrHist.* 3b, commentary p. 613.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 614.

century and to have lived at Scyllus, an estate near Olympia given to him by the Spartans. He probably stayed there until ca. 371 B.C., when the Eleans repossessed Scyllus. His purpose in going to Sparta was quite different from that of Herodotus or Hellanicus, but he probably had continual access to Sparta itself and thus, could have made use of such documents as the Spartans permitted him to see for his very late work on the Spartan constitution. Unfortunately, the work does not suggest a great deal of original research into the more important aspects of Spartan history.

CHARON of Lampsacus (*FGrHist.* 262) was probably a visitor to Sparta since he said that the Spartans, in his day, still displayed the cup given by Zeus to Alcmene. He published, perhaps as a result of his visit, the official list of Spartan magistrates ΠΡΥΤΑΝΕΙΣ ΟΙ ΤΩΝ ΛΑΚΕΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΩΝ, which Jacoby thought was intended as the foundation either of a history or of a universal chronical.[4]

PERSAEUS of Citium (*FGrHist.* 584), one of the first generation students of Zeno and long time confidant of Antigonus Gonatas, is represented, in Diogenes Laertius, by eleven titles including a constitution of Sparta.

From the two fragments of this work, we learn that suckling pigs were called ὀρθραγορίσκοι and not ὀρθαγορίσκοι by the Spartans (Athen. 140B). We also learn that at the ἐπάϊκλα the wealthy were made responsible for food and the less well-off provided the laurel leaves on which it was eaten (Athen. 140EF).

DICAEARCHUS of Messene (*FHG.* II, p. 225, F. 21), a student of Aristotle, was a prolific writer, geographer, philosopher, and orator. Highly respected in his own day (*fin. s. iv a.*), he was also admired later. Cicero praised him as an excellent historian and said that he had lived in the Peloponnesus (*Ep. ad Att.* 6.2). His many books included one on the measurement of the mountains of the Peloponnesus and a constitution of Sparta. The latter was so highly esteemed by the Spartans that a law was passed requiring the book to be read annually before the youth of the city as they assembled at the hall of the ephors.

---

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 614; or a Cultural History in *Atthis*, p. 59.

Δικαίαρχος, Φειδίου, Σικελιώτης ἐκ πόλεως Μεσήνης, Ἀριστοτέλους ἀκουστής, φιλόσοφος καὶ ῥήτωρ καὶ γεωμέτρης. Καταμετρήσεις τῶν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ ὀρῶν . . . . Οὗτος ἔγραψε τὴν πολιτείαν Σπαρτιατῶν· καὶ νόμος ἐτέθη ἐν Λακεδαίμονι, καθ' ἕκαστον ἔτος ἀναγινώσκεσθαι τὸν λόγον εἰς τὸ τῶν ἐφόρων ἀρχεῖον· τοὺς δὲ τὴν ἡβητικὴν ἔχοντας ἡλικίαν ἀκροᾶσθαι. Καὶ τοῦτο ἐκράτησε μέχρι πολλοῦ. (*Suda* s.v. Dicaearchus).

Dicaearchus, son of Pheidius, a Sicilian from Messene, student of Aristotle, philosopher, orator, and geometrician. (among his works was one entitled) *Measurements of the Mountains of the Peloponnesus* . . . . This Dicaearchus wrote the *Constitution of the Spartiates*, and a law was enacted in Lacedaemon requiring this work to be read annually before the meeting place of the ephors; the youth of the city who were just coming of age, were required to listen. This custom was observed for a long time.

Why was the book of a foreign writer so honored? Apart from the obvious answer that the Spartans were not prepared to produce their own work, Müller suggested that Dicaearchus was so favored because he was a Dorian and probably had close family ties with leading Spartans.[5] Jacoby expressed a somewhat similar opinion.[6] If correct, this would probably provide adequate explanation of the *Suda's* reference to Dicaearchus as a Lacedaemonian.

The law requiring the annual public reading of the constitution provides an interesting example of the use of written materials in Sparta, but the date of the law's enactment is unknown. The *Suda* merely said that it was in effect for a long time. If such an expression as "a long time" is held to be meaningless, it might be possible that the passage of the law coincided with the residence of Dicaearchus in Sparta. This seems altogether probable, and it would also help to explain the Spartan preference of this constitution to those of Thibron and Xenophon; it was new and suited a contemporary need. Indeed, it may well have been written at the request of the ephors.

If, on the other hand, the expression is allowed to bear any great weight, one might be tempted to think in terms of a later date for the law. Following their dissolution by Cleomenes in 227 B.C. (and subsequent restoration), the ephors lived a rather precarious existence until after the separation of Sparta from the Achaean League c. 183/2 B.C. Passage of the law at this late date would

[5] C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (Paris 1841-70), II, p. 225.
[6] Jacoby, *FGrHist.*, 3b, commentary p. 615.

correspond to a general revival of the older traditions of the city; and thus, would have had sufficient motivation. But it would also require one to believe that the Spartans resurrected a document more than one hundred years old at a time when they were finally able to produce something of their own.

Sphaerus the Borysthenite (*FGrHist.* 585), although one of the more important visitors to Sparta, is not well known. Only a few facts are certain, but the general outline of his relations with Sparta are clear enough.[7]

Sometime shortly before 242 B.C., he was in Sparta giving lectures or otherwise teaching the youth of the city. One of his listeners was the youthful Cleomenes, with whom he formed a lasting friendship.

> λέγεται δὲ καὶ λόγων φιλοσόφων τόν Κλεομένη μετασχεῖν ἔτι μειράκιον ὄντα, Σφαίρου τοῦ Βορυσθενίτου παραβάλλοντος εἰς τὴν Λακεδαίμονα καὶ περὶ τοὺς νέους καὶ τοὺς ἐφήβους οὐκ ἀμελῶς διατρίβοντος. (Plut. *Agis et Cleom.* 23.2)

> It is said that Cleomenes, while still a youth, took an interest in philosophy after Sphaerus the Boresthenite made a stopover in Lacedaemon and occupied himself with the youth and young men of the city.

At some time in his career, he became the student of Cleanthes (fl. 264/3-233/2) and was then invited to the court of Ptolemy; Jacoby suggested that it was probably Philadelphus: Πτολεμαίου τε πρὸς Κλεάνθην ἐπιστείλαντος ἢ αὐτὸν ἐλθεῖν ἢ πέμψαι τινά, Σφαῖρος μὲν ἀπῆλθε ... Ptolemy sent to Cleanthes and requested that he come himself or send another; Sphaerus went... (Diog. Laert. 7.185).

Before 227/6, he was back in Sparta where he helped Cleomenes with the constitutional and educational reforms instituted that year. The details of the ancient educational system of the Spartans were supplied by Sphaerus. After filling up the citizen body with new members from the best of the Perioikoi, and after training four thousand hoplites, Cleomenes turned to the educational system: ἐπὶ

[7] Oliva, *op. cit.*, p. 216ff., has a good summary of the views of other scholars concerning the date of Sphaerus' arrival in Sparta. Some have believed that he was there before the kingship of Cleomenes and that he was the tutor of Agis.

τὴν παιδείαν τῶν νέων ἐτράπη καὶ τὴν λεγομένην ἀγωγήν, ἧς τὰ πλεῖστα παρὼν ὁ Σφαῖρος αὐτῷ συγκαθίστη: He then turned to the education of the youth and the so-called *agoge*; Sphaerus, who was there at the time, supplied most of the details. (Plut. *Agis et Cleom.* 32.3)

It was probably during this second visit that he wrote his constitution of Sparta (Περὶ Λακωνικῆς πολιτείας) mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (7.177). It seems almost certain, as Jacoby said, that this work was directly related to the actual reforms of King Cleomenes and may have been written as a type of defense of them.

Sometime during the same year Cleomenes also delivered a speech before the Gerousia. The speech described, in considerable detail, the ancient constitution from the king's point of view. Attention was given to the excessive and undesirable acquisition of power by the ephors. It is possible that Sphaerus wrote this speech for Cleomenes, but this is very uncertain and there is no direct evidence for the assumption. The contents of the speech do, however, accord well with the learning one might reasonably expect from a writer like Sphaerus. Regardless of authorship, it seems likely that the basic material of the speech was supplied by Sphaerus.

It is also possible that the book on Lycurgus and Socrates Περὶ Λυκούργου καὶ Σωκράτους γ̄ was written at this time, but this is uncertain.

Of the two works relating to Sparta, only two fragments survive. One, from the constitution, repeats the details about the ἐπάϊκλα (Athen. 141CD). The other, also from the constitution (?), gives the number of the Gerousia as twenty-eight plus the two kings (Plut. *Lyc.* 5.12).

The final knowledge we have of this remarkable man is that he went to the court of Ptolemy Philopator. Jacoby suggested that this trip was made in the latter part of 222 B.C., perhaps in the company of the defeated King Cleomenes.

Once again, a foreigner dramatised the striking character of the Spartans—so rich in traditions (including written records) but unable to make effective use of them.

And yet their failure does not seem to have been because of illiteracy. For how could Cleomenes have been so ignorant of the oral traditions of his own city? His need was for a master propagandist able to select portions of that tradition and to present it

in a way that would attract attention and convince others. The words of a foreign professor carried extra weight in a culture that was not confident of its own powers. In this respect Cleomenes was somewhat like Lysander who not only had his speech written by a foreigner, but thought it would be more convincing still, if he could gain the support of oracles.

POLEMON of Ilium (*FHG.* III, p. 108, F. 18), a prolific but little known writer and traveller, was active ca. 200/180 B.C. During his travels, he wrote a book about the votive offerings he had seen in Laconia (Περὶ τῶν ἐν Λακεδαίμονι ἀναθημάτων). The single fragment of this work (Athen. 574 C) describes the offering of Cottina the famous courtesan; she had dedicated an image of herself and a bronze cow. Nothing more is known of Polemon's visit to Sparta and, unfortunately, no mention was made of inscribed offerings.

ARISTOCLES (*FGrHist.* 586) is represented by a single, indirect citation (Athen. 140B) in which he was quoted as an authority who agreed with Persaeus on the Laconian name for suckling pigs. Nothing else is known of Aristocles, and it is not even certain that he went to Sparta. On the other hand, he may have actually been a Spartan since this common name was known there. Jacoby dated him to the period before Didymus.

DIOSCOURIDES (*FGrHist.* 594), a very common name, was cited by several ancient sources in contexts important for Sparta. Reliable identification of the authors and works has long been a difficult problem for scholars and the fragmentary nature of the evidence may well make the perfect solution unobtainable. But the main outlines of the problem and proposed solutions are as follows.

Dioscourides, the student of Isocrates, is known only through a reference in the epitomized first book of Athenaeus. The citation, Διοσκουρίδης ὁ Ἰσοκράτους μαθητής (Athen. 11A), appears toward the end of a very long quotation from another work entitled Περὶ τοῦ τῶν ἡρώων καθ' Ὅμηρον βίου (Athen. 8E-11B). This student is nowhere identified as the author of the book of heroes; only as another author who had cited the two verses from the Iliad (9.119f.) in question.

Photius (*Suda* s.v. Ὅμηρος), looking back to a full text of Athenaeus, cited the beginning of the book of heroes (with short title) and named Dioscourides as its author: ὅτι Διοσκορίδης ἐν τοῖς παρ' Ὁμήρῳ νόμοις φησίν, ὡς ὁ ποιητὴς ὁρῶν....

Plutarch (*Lyc.* 11.9) mentioned a Dioscourides who wrote a constitution of Sparta. Athenaeus (140B) cited the same author and book. In addition, there are two fragments which name the author but not the book (Athen. 140EF, Plut. *Ages.* 35.1).

A Dioscourides was honored by the people of Cnossus in return for an encomium he had composed for the Cretans. He was a grammarian from Tarsus and was active ca. 100 B.C. (*Inscr. Cret. Knossos* 12 p. 66 Guard. *Syll.*³ 721).

Photius (*Suda* s.v. σκυτάλη), named a Dioscourides as his source for an otherwise unknown use of the σκυτάλη in Sparta (*infra* p. 77).

A Dioscourides was also cited by Diogenes Laertius (1.63) and by Athenaeus (507E) as the author of a work entitled Ἀπομνημονεύματα.

E. Schwartz [8] and v. Wilamowitz [9] thought that the student of Isocrates had written the constitution of Sparta and that such a work was perfectly suitable to the time and interests of the alleged author. It follows from this idea that the unnamed student who corrected Isocrates' view of the Spartans (*supra* p. 44) in the *Panathenaecus*, was none other than this same Dioscourides.

Wilamowitz also thought that the Νόμιμα was a part of the constitution. This seems to be at least a possibility since the *Suda* also cited Aristotle's constitution of Ithaca as a source for their use of the σκυτάλη.

Regarding the book of heroes though, Schwartz denied any connection with the student of Isocrates. First of all, because he is not actually cited as its author in the epitome. Moreover, the entire work was seen by Schwartz as a late compilation of Homeric scholarship, scarcely earlier than Aristarchus. The attribution by Photius (*Suda*) was a mistake in the tradition. Drawing an analogy with other citations of the ἱστορίαι in the Homeric scholia, he argued that just as authors' names were frequently taken from their context and placed at the end, the *Suda* reversed the procedure. Removing the citation which appears toward the end of the ex-

---

[8] E. Schwartz, *RE.* 4, cols. 1128-29.

[9] U. von Wilamowitz, *Hermes* 35 (1900), pp. 542ff.

cursus in the epitomized version, he placed it at the beginning (with its short title), as if Dioscourides had been the source for the whole book of heroes.

Jacoby rejected most of these arguments and said that the ἱστορίαι are not really a parallel and that the citation ὁ Ἰσοκράτους μαθητής, which did not appear in the version known to Photius (*Suda*), was intended as a very emphatic identification. Perhaps, he suggested, the reference in the *Suda* to the author's name, was taken directly from the original version; his name was simply Dioscourides with no further identification. But this author himself had occasion to quote the other Dioscourides (the student of Isocrates), and so, used the emphatic form of reference. If true, Athenaeus (or his epitomizer) was quoting a passage of Dioscourides' book of heroes which itself mentioned the fact that the other Dioscourides (the student) had quoted the same verses.

Jacoby accepted Dioscourides as the author of the book of heroes and thought that the constitution of Sparta was by the same author. His argument was largely based on the supposition that both works show strong Stoic influence. This fact, together with considerations of chronology, point to Dioscourides the grammarian from Tarsus as author of both works. This grammarian was probably a descendent—perhaps the grandson—of the Stoic philosopher, Dioscourides of Tarsus.

The Νόμιμα may also have been the work of this author, but this is far less certain; the Ἀπομνημονεύματα was clearly by another Dioscourides since it is known to have been used by Hegesander ca. 150 B.C.

On the whole, Jacoby's arguments seem to make a better accounting of the known facts in this complex situation, but the evidence is not strong enough for complete certainty. Unfortunately, the greatest uncertainty attaches to the Νόμιμα, potentially the most useful book for my present purposes (*infra*, p. 77).

It is unknown whether or not the author of the constitution of Sparta visited the city.

WRITERS AND WRITTEN MATERIALS RELATED TO SPARTA

SPARTANS	PERIOD	IMPORTANT FOREIGN VISITORS
TYRTAEUS (elegiac poetry etc.) first inscriptions, first inscribed sherds from Orthia shrine ± 600	*fin. (?) s. vii a.*	
ephor lists c. 556 oracles (?)	*s. vi a.*	
	med. s. v a.	HERODOTUS HELLANICUS (Carnean victory lists) KRITIAS (constitutions)
	fin. s. v a.	HIPPIAS (gave lectures etc.) XENOPHON (exile, constitution) CHARON OF LAMPSACUS (published Spartan king lists c. 400 B.C.)
LYSANDER (speech by Cleon of Halicarnassus, forged oracles) PAUSANIAS (constitution, ca. 394) THIBRON (constitution)	*init. s. iv a.*	
	med. s. iv a.	DICAEARCUS OF MESSENE (constitution read annually to youth)
	med. s. iii a.	PERSAEUS OF CITIUM (constitution) SPHAERUS THE BORYSTHENITE (gave lectures c. 242, constitution)
SOSILUS (expedition of Hannibal)	*fin. s. iii a.*	POLEMON OF ILIUM c. 200/180 (book on monuments)
SOSIBIUS (many titles) MOLPIS (constitution)	*init. s. ii a.*	
NICOCLES (antiquities) ARISTOCRATES (antiquities, 4 bks.) DIOPHANTUS (antiquities, 4 bks.) PAUSANIAS (antiquities; on sacrifices) HIPPASUS (constitution, 5 bks.)	*s. i a.*	
	s. ii a.	PAUSANIAS PLUTARCH OTHERS (?)

CHAPTER FIVE

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DOCUMENTS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY AND LATER

For the period of Spartan history beginning with the second quarter of the fourth century B.C., the evidence concerning literacy in the city, though still meager and sometimes contradictory, begins to become more abundant. It is for the middle part of the fourth century that we have positive testimony for the existence of the ancient chronicles (Tacitus *Ann.* 4.43 and *supra* p. 33); we might safely infer a somewhat earlier, but unreported existence for them.

A reader might be led by the consideration of the somewhat more open societies of the fourth and third centuries, when the great numbers of constitutions, historical works, and other types of scholarship began to make appearances elsewhere, to expect the same surge in literary activity among the Spartans.

No assumption could be more mistaken. It has already been shown, in the preceding chapter, that after ca. 391 B.C., and the death of Thibron, not a single Spartan writer is known, even by name, until the appearance of Sosilus (ca. 218) and he did not even work in Sparta.

Similarly we have no inscribed public documents from the fourth century, no proxeny decrees, and no indication that any ever existed. The possibility that *IG* V 1, 3, a treaty between the Lacedaemonians and Achaeans, was erected in the late fourth century, is possible but depends on the readings of Fourmont.[1]

Inscriptions of other types are also few in number. Perhaps there are twenty-five or so all together (from the immediate vicinity of Sparta). Of this small number, nine (or ten?) were tomb stones for soldiers—including three foreigners; three were athletic victory dedications (including one for Kyniska, sister of Agesilaus, who won a chariot race at Olympia). There are also several statue bases, roof tiles, religious dedications, and a few of unknown type.

---

[1] *SEG.* 11, no. 457.

The inscriptions known from the third century present a somewhat similar picture. The number is not large; perhaps twenty (or a few more) identified from the area of the city. In addition there are probably some others which have been assigned, mistakenly, to another date; there are also a number of inscribed sherds. Of those on stone, we have the possible remains of a list of officials, fragments of one or two treaties, one proxeny decree, two grave stones for soldiers (one a foreigner), one dedication, and one unknown. The total for the fourth and third centuries makes a strong impression on any reader; but they impress mainly because of their paucity. Even so, the third century seems to have shown a slow beginning of public inscriptions of a type which became much more common in the next and succeeding centuries.

Literary evidence is also somewhat limited, but we do have several interesting references to the use of written contracts in Sparta at this time.

Isocrates (*Panath.* 243) referred to contracts (συμβόλαια) and to the Spartans as falsifiers of accounts (παραλογιζομένους). Isocrates did not specify that these were written documents, and a brief survey of other writers' use of the word shows no example from the fifth century in which it can be understood unambiguously to mean "written contracts." In Thucydides 1.77, the word seems to refer to interstate agreements between Athens and the allies. Commercial or other relationships were probably regulated by these agreements and they were enforceable in court. Euripides (*Ion* 411) used the word ironically of "personal relationships" but did not even hint that any kind of written document was meant. Plato (*Plt.* 295A) used the word of contracts and their enforcement. Aristotle ([*Rh. Al.*] 1431A) referred to contracts and lawsuits (ποιήσασθαι τὸ συμβόλαιον). Isocrates (*Paneg.* 11) used the word of contracts connected with laws suits (πρὸς τοὺς ἀγῶνας τοὺς περὶ τῶν ἰδίων συμβολαίων). The same meaning is apparent in *Adv. Lochiten* 15. Most of the passages cited used the word to mean "contract" and we should probably understand them to mean "written contract," but this is nowhere certain; references to contracts may have been merely to agreements sworn before witnesses.

Harvey claimed that even in Athens, written contracts are not demonstrable for the fifth century and that the oral method of

---

[2] Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 606-615.

conducting business before witnesses was still prevalent.[2] Written documents were widely used in Athens in the fourth century, however, and Harvey suggested that, since our chief source of information about them is from the fourth century orators, the existence of similar written documents in the fifth century has simply gone unnoticed because of the lack of sources. This seems to be an obvious inference, and perhaps the same could be said of Sparta except that, in this case, we do not even have the fourth century orators.

There is, however, a strong possibility that we have two actual fifth century contracts inscribed on a bronze tablet (*IG* V 2, 159). The inscriptions, found at Tegea, recorded two deposits of money by Xuthias (Ξουθίας), son of Philachaeus. One deposit was for two hundred mnai, the other for four hundred. The specifications for its safe-keeping and return are very elaborate and are sufficient to justify us in calling the document a contract, though not necessarily a συμβόλαιον. The contract on side "A" specified that Xuthias himself would collect the money if he lived but if not, his heirs were to get it five years after the age of puberty. Side "B" specified that, if Xuthias did not get the money before his death, his sons were to get it five years after puberty; if they did not live that long, his daughters were to get it; if they did not live, then his illegitimate children, then his closest relatives. It was further specified that any disputes were to be settled in a legal manner by the Tegeans.

Although the alphabet is Arcadian (+ = Ξ, ↓ = X, C = Γ),[3] the text is not; "on the contrary, αἰ, τοί, the infinitive in μεν, the numerals in κατιαι, and ηεβο̄ντι are all positive evidence against the Arcadian dialect. The dialect is plainly Doric, and while certain special peculiarities of Laconian are not observed, the probability is still that the foreign depositor was from the neighboring Laconia (cf. *Athen.* vi.233), as long maintained by Kirchoff."[4]

Perhaps Xuthias was one of those Spartans said by Poseidonius (Athen. 6.233D, *FGrHist.* 87.48) to have thwarted the laws forbidding the import of gold or silver into Laconia, by depositing his money in Tegea. If so, Xuthias the Lacedaemonian must have written out the text of the contract using his local dialect. This in turn was faithfully recorded by the Arcadian scribe who used his own alphabet. For an earlier (ca. 540 B.C.) example in which a

[3] Jeffery, *op. cit.*, p. 206 on the Arcadian alphabet.
[4] C. D. Buck, "Epigraphical Notes," *CPh* 20 (1925), p. 135.

foreigner is said to have deposited money with a Spartan (Glaucus), we might compare the account of Herodotus (6.86). Terms for recovery were given, but the foreigner's trust in the honesty of Glaucus was the chief guarantee of the transaction. No written document of any kind was employed.

There is also a possible literary reference to the use of written contracts in Sparta during the fourth century. Dioscourides (*FGrHist.* 594 and *supra* p. 71) is not identifiable with any great certainty, but the possibility exists that he was the student of Isocrates mentioned by Athenaeus (11A).

If the author of the Νόμιμα was, in fact, the student of Isocrates, his testimony means that written contracts were used between private business men in fourth century Sparta.

> Διοσκουρίδης δὲ ἐν τοῖς Περὶ Νομίμων τοὺς δανείζοντας ἐν Σπάρτῃ διαιρεῖν σκυτάλην, δύο παρόντων μαρτύρων, καὶ γράφειν τὸ συμβόλαιον ἐν ἑκατέρῳ τμήματι, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἑνὶ τῶν μαρτύρων διδόναι, τὸ δὲ δι' ἑαυτοῦ ἔχειν· (Photius, *Suda* s.v. σκυτάλη)

> Dioscourides, in his books *On Customs*, says that Spartan money lenders, in the presence of two witnesses, divide a *skytale* and write the contract on each half. They then give one part to one of the witnesses and keep the other half for their own use (records?).

For the third century we have additional evidence which proves that contracts were written then. Plutarch said that as a part of the cancellation of debts which occurred in about 242 B.C., all mortgage documents were brought together in the Agora and were burned there in a great pile.

> καὶ τὰ παρὰ τῶν χρεωστῶν γραμματεῖα συνενέγκαντες εἰς ἀγοράν, ἃ κλάρια καλοῦσι, καὶ πάντα συνθέντες εἰς ἓν συνέπρησαν (*Agis & Cleom.* 13.3).

> And having collected, from the debtors, the mortgage documents (which they call *klaria*), they gathered them together into one pile and burned them.

These were written documents and the words of Plutarch strongly suggest that this was the regular way of recording loans. There was nothing unusual about this, and therefore we may assume that these practices were not necessarily new in the mid-third century. Documents described in this context are limited to loans but even these would probably have belonged to the general category of συμβόλαια mentioned by Isocrates and Dioscourides. Perhaps these

συμβόλαια and the κλάρια were among the documents burned. The words are probably more or less equivalent—συμβόλαια being a general term for contracts; γραμματεῖα being more general still, and κλάρια being a technical word used specifically of land loans. It is perhaps significant that the word κλάρια is used in this sense only in this passage. Plutarch made it clear that the usage was strictly Laconian, and that the word was the local equivalent of γραμματεῖα, a more common word for contracts. The fact that the Spartans already had their own word for the practice might suggest that the custom was well established.

Other than the fact that these were written documents used between citizens, the most significant fact about them is that they were not recorded on stone or other permanent material. Plutarch's words suggest that they were on some easily combustable material, perhaps papyrus (or leather? or wood?), and that they may have been kept in a public place provided for the purpose. It is possible, of course, that men in possession of the documents were merely ordered to bring them from their homes, but if Plutarch's language is taken literally, it suggests that the same men gathered the mortgages (συνενέγκαντες), piled them up (συνθέντες εἰς ἕν), and then burned them (συνέπρησαν). If individuals did not bring them in, and if there was no public place where they were kept, we must imagine the reformers raiding the homes of all the mortgage holders. Still another possibility (an unlikely one) is that the mortgages were placed in the fields, as were the mortgage stones of Solon. If so the Spartan versions must have been written on wooden slabs.

Another document relating, in a dubious way, to the third century, is the curious series of letters recorded in *1 Maccabees* 12-15. The book itself was written in Hebrew, in the latter part of the second century, and survives in a Greek version. The first letter cited was from Jonathan the High Priest in Jerusalem. It was addressed to the Spartans "our brothers" Σπαρτιάταις τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν. Appended to the letter is another letter alleged to have been written by the Spartan King Areus (309-264 B.C.) to Onias the High Priest. In this letter, Areus was quoted as saying that documents had recently come to light showing a kinship between the Spartans and Jews. The document referred to by Areus (if it existed) must have been older then the king himself and must have come from the local archives mentioned in the next letter of the Spartans to the Jews (*1 Maccabees* 14.16-23). This letter was said

to have been written on brass tablets (δέλτοις χαλκαῖς) after the death of Jonathan, and was delivered by some Jewish ambassadors who were returning to Jerusalem from a mission to Rome. The visit of the ambassadors is narrated and it is stated that a copy of what was said was written down and placed in the public archive (τῷ δήμῳ) as a permanent memorial.

> καὶ ἤρεσεν τῷ δήμῳ ἐπιδέξασθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐνδόξως καὶ τοῦ θέσθαι τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῶν λόγων αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀποδεδεγμένοις τῷ δήμῳ βιβλίοις τοῦ μνημόσυνον ἔχειν τὸν δῆμον τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν. τὸ δὲ ἀντίγραφον τούτων ἔγραψαν Σίμωνι τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ.
>
> And it was the pleasure of the demos for these men to be received with appropriate honors and for a copy of their words to be preserved in the public archives as a permanent record for the demos of the Spartiates. They also made a copy of these proceedings for Simon the High Priest.

Josephus also recorded this series of letters and added some interesting details not found in *1 Maccabees*. To the letter of Areus, he added that Demoteles was to be the messenger, that the writing was square (τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐστὶ τετράγωνα) and that the seal was an eagle holding a serpent (*AJ*. 12.225-228; 13.164-166). To Jonathan's letter, he added the more usual form of the address: Λακεδαιμονίων ἐφόροις καὶ γερουσίᾳ καὶ δήμῳ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν. He also said that the Spartans passed a decree of friendship and alliance with the Jews.[6]

> οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τούς τε πρεσβευτὰς φιλοφρόνως ὑπεδέξαντο καὶ ψήφισμα ποιησάμενοι περὶ φιλίας καὶ συμμαχίας πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀπέστειλαν.
>
> The Lacedaemonians received these ambassadors cordially and then, after passing decrees of friendship and alliance, they dismissed them.

S. Tedesche and S. Zeitlin accepted the original letter of Jonathan with its appended letter of King Areus as genuine; "hence no

---

[6] M. Fourmont, in a letter from Sparta dated 10 April, 1730, claimed to have seen an inscription concerning an embassy made by the Jews in the time of the Maccabees. If so, he failed to copy it, and we need not accept his word. But see Ch. II, note 22 (*supra*) and L. Robert's opinion of Fourmont. He described him as "un honnête homme et un copiste consciencieux." Fourmont's letter may be found in *Documents Inédits sur l'Histoire de France, Missions Archéologiques Françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles*, sect. 5, vol. 12, pt. 1 (Paris 1902) p. 624.

reason to doubt the authenticity of the letter to the Spartans.... Areus' original letter was purported to have been written more than 150 years before, and we see how careful the Jews were to preserve historical documents. This letter is rather an argument for the historicity of the other letters than otherwise." [6]

K. Chrimes, who noted that the general trend of modern scholars is to reject the letters, also observed that the account of Josephus was written "in perfect good faith," and that the ancient readers of *I Maccabees* "regarded the treaty as genuine and the kinship with Sparta as an established fact." [7] Good faith, though, is never a substitute for authenticity and it is better to regard the letters as Maccabean forgeries. Jacoby remarked "wer diesen Brief für das Product einer griechischen Feder halten kann, dem ist nicht zu helfen." [8]

---

[6] S. Tedesche and S. Zeitlin, *The First Book of Maccabees: an English Translation by Tedesche, Introduction and commentary by Zeitlin* (N.Y. 1950), pp. 45-46.

[7] Chrimes, *op. cit.*, p. 176. For a summary of scholarly opinion regarding all documents in *I Maccabees* see *C.A.H.*, vol. 8, pp. 710ff.

[8] Jacoby, *op. cit.*, p. 659, no. 8.

CHAPTER SIX

SPARTA IN THE SECOND CENTURY B.C. AND LATER

It is really with the beginning of the second century B.C., that evidence for literacy in Sparta becomes very much more abundant. From the very first, the evidence suggests a wider use of public records and a somewhat greater sophistication in the city. How much (if any) of this is to be attributed to the reforms of Cleomenes (ca. 227/6), to the increasing influence of outside contacts made during the balance of the century, and especially to the more international atmosphere which must have prevailed in Sparta after that time, is uncertain. It seems desirable, though, to make a clear distinction between the earlier period and the later history of the city. For convenience, this break may be made with the death of Nabis and the entry of the city into the Achaean League in ca. 192 B.C. But it must be noted that the subject of literacy is one of continuity which passes beyond arbitrary classifications of historical periods. Nevertheless, Sparta, after the beginning of the second century, need no longer be thought of in Lycurgan terms. As far as literacy, books, and public records are concerned, Hellenistic and Roman Sparta must have been somewhat like other small Greek towns, differing primarily in the pride taken in its ancient institutions which brought with it periodic attempts at revival.

Most of the evidence for this later period is epigraphical, but attention has already been drawn to the fact that this was also the century of Sosibius, Sparta's one claim to an important scholar.

Reasons were given (*supra* p. 61), in an attempt to explain the striking absence of writers in Sparta at the time of their greatest productivity in so many other cities. But an acceptable explanation of the sudden appearance, in Sparta, of so formidable a writer as Sosibius might well be a more difficult task.

As has already been stated, all his known works were directly related to Sparta and its traditions; there is no indication that he ever wrote about anything else. As far as is known, he never lived or studied outside Sparta; and yet, it is difficult to believe that he

did not. The assumption that he did is almost necessary in view of his obvious acquaintance with Hellenistic scholarship and his probable possession of Aristophanes' text of Alcman.

Of the range of dates suggested by Jacoby for Sosibius (250/150), the latter part is preferable since it corresponds with the expansion of Spartan foreign contacts. Both the Achaean League and the Romans began to play a much greater role in the affairs of the Spartans. This was accompanied by a great deal of travel to and from Sparta and by numerous exchanges of diplomatic missions. There was even a special hotel built to house Roman and other diplomats in Sparta. Built in the years shortly after 178 B.C., it is known through several roof tiles inscribed with the words κατάλυμα τῶν 'Ρωμαίων καὶ δικαστᾶν. *IG* V 1, 7 also referred to the hotel and to the officials in charge of it: ἐπιμελ[η]ταὶ τοῦ 'Ρωμαίου καταλύμ[ατος].

The first part of the second century was also the time of the Spartan revival of a silver coinage. This included the issue of small quantities of the Achaean League type as well as a local type. At the same time, there was a large number of bronze coins with monograms identical to many of the silver coins. These have sometimes been dated to the period following 146 B.C., but the similarity of monograms seems to place them in the first half of the century.[1]

Likewise, this was the time when large numbers (for the Spartans) of proxeny decrees were inscribed on stone for public display. There are approximately thirteen such decrees known from the second century, most of them from the first half of the century. Prior to this time, there were very few, if any, such inscriptions. The honorary statue bases for Kyniska belong to ca. 400 B.C. but they are not comparable to the proxeny decrees.

On the whole, the first half of the second century seems to have been the beginning of a great expansion of foreign contacts of all kinds and a generally improved climate at home. Under the new circumstances, the sudden appearance of Sosibius and those who came after him, is not so surprising as, at first sight, it might seem.

Since the bulk of the evidence for the later period is epigraphical, it might be advantageous to provide a few illustrations from the public inscriptions of the second century and later.

IG V 1, 5, a proxeny decree in honor of Karneades of Cyrene, was

---

[1] For a new defense of the later dates, see S. Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann *Die Münzprägung der Lakedaimonier* (Berlin 1978).

erected during the early part of the century. In this inscription, we have the first epigraphical reference to written laws in Sparta (γέγραπτα ἐν τοῖς νό[μο]ῖς τοῖς προξένοις). The provisions of the decree specify that the contractor (ἐκδοτήρ), together with certain unnamed officials, was to provide a stele which, inscribed with the honors awarded, was to be erected in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. It was to be located in the place provided by law and in accordance with a work order (or mutual agreement with the contractor?) which was to be written by the architect: κατὰ συ[νγρ]α[φ]ὰν ἅν κα γράψει ὁ ἀρχιτέκτων.[2]

Tod, astonished at the clumsy style of *IG* V 1, 4, thought that it showed a lack of familiarity with the drafting of such decrees.[3] He had not seen *IG* V 1, 5 (discovered the year Tod's catalogue was published), but its text is, in some respects, even more awkward. The style of the decrees is difficult to characterize, but consists, to a large degree, of clauses loosly strung together in an order which makes reading difficult; it may seem to be an illogical, even careless arrangement.

The opening lines of *IG* V 1, 4 are almost elegant in comparison with number five. In the former, the entire statement concerning the petition, made by the man to be honored, was expressed in a continuous and fluent construction, using the genitive absolute, leading to the actual decree of honors. The statement of honors granted was made in a kind of indirect discourse with a series of infinitives (following ἔδοξε). This is well enough for the first six lines, but then, at line 13, the infinitive construction is broken by five lines of instructions to the contractor and architect. Here an imperative construction was used. In line 19, the text returns to

[2] The συγγραφαί are known elsewhere and can be extremely elaborate documents as is *IG* 1², 1668 (347/6 B.C.) which gives details for stone preparations and related matters. There is no reason to think that the Spartan documents were on the same scale. They may not have been inscribed on stone at all since there is no provision for inscribed copies. They could, nevertheless, have served the purpose of a contractor's specifications for type of stone, size, shape, and ornamentation. One interesting possibility is an inscribed sherd (*s. iv a.*; *BSA* 24, p. 121, no. 79). The inscription was in two lines and the preserved part reads: Ἐτυμ ... Συγ .... Woodward interpreted line one as a name based on the root Ἔτυμος, perhaps = Ἐτυμ[οκλῆς]. For line two he suggested two possibilities: [κατὰ] συγ[γραφάν] or [ὁ] συγ[γραφεύς] since the letters ΣΥΓ are unlikely to have been the beginning of a name. The fragment is much too small for confidence, but if Woodward's restoration is correct, the inscription may well have been a συγγραφή.

[3] Tod, *op. cit.*, p. 4, no. 217b.

the honors (and to the infinitive construction), which, logically and stylistically, should have followed directly after lines 10 or 13. The result is an appearance of carelessness, as if line 19 had been a mere afterthought. In line 21 the text resumes the imperative construction and directs the hierothetes to invite the honoree to the public hearth.

In contrast, the opening lines of *IG* V 1, 5 are repetitious and lacking in the clarity and ease of style found in the other decree. The first line has the same genitive absolute, but this changes immediately to a purpose clause with its finite verb in the passive. Even the grammar is somewhat questionable here; for what is the true subject of this verb? Karneades? impersonal? Doubtless the latter, but the construction is an awkward one.

In line 4, the entire statement of Karneades' petition is repeated in the formulaic ἐπεὶ clause which would have been sufficient standing alone.[4] This is followed, at last, by the actual decree of honors.

> [πό]θοδον ποιησαμένου Καρνεάδου τοῦ
> Αἰγλάνορος Κυραναίου, ὅπως διαλε-
> χθ[ῆ]ι τῶι δάμωι περὶ τῶν φιλανθρώπων
> καὶ περὶ προξενίας· ἐπεὶ Καρνεάδης Αἰγλ[ά-]
> νορος πόθοδον ποιησάμενος διελέγη περ[ὶ]
> τῶν φιλανθρώπων καὶ περὶ προξενίας, ἔδοξ[ε]
> τῶι δάμωι· Καρνεάδην Αἰγλάνορος Κυρανα[ῖ-]
> ον πρόξενον εἶμεν τᾶς πόλεος . . .

> Since Karneades, son of Aiglanor, a Kyrenaian, has petitioned for consideration, by the demos, of his request for special rights and proxeny status; Since Karneades, son of Aiglanor has petitioned for the right to address the demos concerning his request for privileges and proxeny status; It seemed good to the demos that Karneades, son of Aiglanor, a Kyrenaian, be named proxenos of the city...

While it may be true, as Tod suspected, that the disjointed style of number 4 indicates a lack of experience in drafting decrees of this type, it is not necessarily evidence of an inability to do better because of illiteracy. In fact, the disjointed style is not unique and examples exist from later times as well.

IG V 1, 26, a decree of the Obe of Amyclae was inscribed, perhaps in the first century B.C., in honor of some local ephors. On the whole, this decree seems better organized than the two preceding

[4] Perhaps the most common way of beginning such a decree.

examples. Following a heading in which the issuing authority is identified, the decree proceeds with the formulaic ἐπεὶ clause which is followed by the decree of honors and admonitions to local officials (using an imperative construction). This was all inscribed in a good logical order, but at the very end (line 17), after seven lines of instructions, the infinitive construction returns and decrees praise of the ephors' secretary: ἐπαινέσαι δὲ καὶ τὸν γραμματέα αὐτῶν / 18 Καλλικλῆ. One might expect this line to have been written earlier as a part of the infinitive construction beginning in line 8 with δεδόχθαι τοῖς Ἀμυκλαιέοις ἐπαινέσαι ἐφόρους. As it was actually written, however, it too gives the impression of carelessness. In fact G. Löschcke, the original editor of the inscription, thought that the last line was an addition to the original text.[5] Although Löschcke did not give reasons for his opinion, one might guess that he was influenced by one of the factors which (in *IG* V 1, 4) displeased Tod—illogical arrangement.

Grammatical considerations might also lead one to suspect a lack of expertise in the drafting of some of these decrees. As one example, lines 15-17 of *IG* V 1, 26 might be cited. These lines contain instructions relating to the expenses of the inscription. The obe was to provide the money, and those appointed to do so were to produce a written account of the expense incurred.

> ... τὰν δὲ εἰς ταύταν δαπάναν δότω ἁ ὠβὰ καὶ λόγον ἐνεγκόντω περὶ τᾶς γεγενημένας δαπάνας τοὺς ἐπὶ ταῦτα κατασταθέντας.

Here something seems to have gone amiss, for we have in line 17, an accusative subject for the imperative verb.

Even while conceding the possibility that inexperience, rather than deliberation, dictated Spartan preferences in stylistic matters, it still seems doubtful that illogical arrangements of clauses, and even grammatical mistakes, should be regarded as evidence of illiteracy or, indeed, as serious faults. H. Marrou, who thought that the Spartans were half-literate, based his judgement largely on such mistakes and faulty spelling.[6] But it is at least possible that the texts of these decrees represent nothing more than the use of colloquial language, perhaps the very words of the actual debate at which they were enacted. This, written down by a secretary, might

---

[5] G. Löschcke, *Ath. Mitt.* 3 (1878), p. 167.

[6] H. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris 1960), p. 40.

then have been inscribed, without revision, into the more formulaic language. Perhaps the secretaries, stone cutters, and all involved were aware of the possibilities of personal loss for deviations, as in the case of the ephors of Gytheum who were threatened with fines of 2,000 drachmas for failure to erect the decree exactly as written.

> ... εἰ δὲ μὴ ἀναθήσοντι οἱ ἔφοροι [ταύταν κα-]
> θὼς γέγραπται, ὑπόδικοι ἔστωσαν [Δαμιάδαι]
> καὶ ἄλλωι τῶι θέλοντι ποτὶ δραχμὰς δι[σχιλίας ἀδι-]
> [α]ιρέτους καὶ μὴ ἔστω προβόλιμος. (*IG* V 1, 1145 *s. I a.*)
>
> ...but if the ephors do not erect this decree exactly as written, let them be liable to Damiades, and to anyone else who wishes, to the extent of two thousand drachmas; let there be no defence.

Perhaps a more important consideration is that each of these decrees required the keeping of other records. The first discussed, specified that a copy of the honors was to be inscribed on stone and set up in the temple of Athena; we may infer that the original text was kept in the records of the issuing authorities. There was also a reference to written laws which regulated the decrees, and to the συγγραφή which was to be written by the architect. This was probably an official contract between the contractor and the architect which gave specifications concerning the practical details of the inscription. If so, it seems likely that both contractor and architect had copies.

For *IG* V 1, 26, we find that, in the obe of Amyclae, there existed a special board of officials known as decree writers (Δογματογράφοι). Their chief responsibility was probably the drafting of decrees such as this one. The instructions require that the inscription be erected in the temple of Alexandra and that an appointed group of officials keep a record of the expense involved (*supra* p. 85). Thus, in this case, we have an original text to be kept somewhere, an inscribed copy to be placed in the temple, and a written statement of the cost. This indicates the existence of a fairly extensive collection of such documents in the small obe of Amyclae. It also suggests similar arrangements in the other villages and in Sparta itself. The ephors of Amyclae also had their own secretary and, while we cannot say anything about the details of his responsibilities, we can easily guess that, at the very least, they must have included keeping records of the acts of this board of ephors.

IG V 1, 30 (123 or 121 B.C.) sheds some light on the exchange of records with other cities in the latter part of the second century.

The inscription is in the form of a letter sent by a *grammateus* of a Macedonian or Achaean town to the ephors and polis of Sparta. The *grammateus* said that he had sent a copy (ἀντίγραφον) of certain decrees (ψηφισμάτων) which he had found written in the records of his town hall and which were in his keeping: τῶν ὄντων παρ' ἐ[μοὶ κειμένων ἐν] τῶι ἀρχείωι ἐν βιβλίωι [ψηφισμάτων γέ]γραφα ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντί[γραφον...]. There followed a proxeny decree, for one or more Spartan citizens, now lost. The copy sent to Sparta was on papyrus, leather, or some such material and, almost certainly, was deposited there in an office similar to the one from which it was issued. There may have been an inscribed copy set up in Sparta as well.

Another example, from the very early part of the second century is *IG* V 1, 28, which was a letter sent from the city of Byllis by the Prytanis and demos. It contained a copy of honors passed by that city: [ἐπεστάλκ]αμε[ν] τιμίων τῶ[ν] π[αρ' ἡ]μῶν ἀντίγραφον].

The reverse procedure is illustrated by *IG* V 1, 1566, in which the Spartans sent a copy of one of their own decrees to Delphi (ca. 29 B.C.): [ἀποστέλλομ]εν ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντίγραφον.

Thus a center, or what is more likely, many centers for the keeping of such records did exist, in Sparta and in some of the villages, at least by the beginning of the second century B.C., and probably earlier. In the earlier centuries, original copies of treaties and the like were kept in a very irregular manner in the houses of generals or kings. But at this later time, we seem to be completely safe in thinking that these particular records were kept in officially established places.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EXTENT OF THE LATE SPARTAN RECORDS

It now remains to try to determine something about the extent of the Spartan efforts in keeping records. This is possible only for the relatively late years, when evidence becomes somewhat more abundant because of the large bureaucracy that existed at that time. Even for this late period, our knowledge is meagre and we can hardly look for more than general impressions. For this purpose the large number of inscribed lists of names of public officials is useful.

Fairly representative is *IG* V 1, 48, a list of six *patronomoi* of the first century B.C. Also named are six *synarchoi* followed by a *grammateus*, three assistant secretaries, and a servant. We do not know the business of the officials named in this inscription and have no idea of the types of documents prepared and maintained by the secretaries. But the fact that the secretary required the assistance of three undersecretaries, suggests that their records were fairly extensive.

IG V 1, 209 (*s. I a.*) is a list of *sitethentes* involved in a religious festival. Included in the list is a priest, a priestess, all the tradesmen necessary for the conduct of the festival, a teacher (διδάσκαλος κατὰ νόμον), a secretary, and a reader (ἀναγνώστας), perhaps of the cult's sacred books. Apparently this group of celebrants not only had records kept by its own secretary, but it also had a book, or collection of books, and a special official who was in charge of giving readings or interpretations from them. It might be argued that the reader was a slave trained to serve in this capacity, as was common in Rome (cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.12; Plut. *Crass.* 2; *supra* p. 45). But the appearance of the name in a list of honored persons rules against the possibility.

While distinctions between the duties of the teacher and the reader may not be possible, it does seem reasonable to assume that the teacher was a learned man who had great knowledge of the ritual traditions of the cult involved, and was able to give authoritative interpretations and answers when needed. The reader seems

more likely to have been responsible for more mechanical functions such as the procedures of the sacrifice, and perhaps other details of the cult ritual. In the absence of more evidence, these interpretations cannot be proved, but it is clear, nevertheless, that this cult group kept its own records, that it had a book (or perhaps many), and that it is unlikely to have been unique in Sparta.

That this particular group was not unique, is shown by *IG* V 1, 210 and 212, lists of Tainarioi which name keepers of sacred books (ἐπὶ γραφῶν Σώινικος and ἐπὶ γραφῶν Εὐάμερος); both *s. I a.*

The exact nature of these sacred books of the Spartans is unknown, but it seems probable that they preserved the ancient traditions of the cult; they may have been among the records which attracted so many foreign scholars to Sparta. This is suggested by the fact that so much of their writing about the Spartans was concerned with social and religious customs.

From the second century A.D., we have the great inscribed parodos wall of the theatre with its many lists of magistrates. These include the twenty-eight separate documents which make up the wall, and twenty-four others which have fallen from it. In addition to these, there are other documents inscribed on stones making up the water channel running around the orchestra, and numerous fragments. The importance of these inscriptions for the question of literacy in Sparta is that they show something of the great size of the municiple bureaucracy which had grown up by the second century A.D. It was made up of many different administrative and religious boards of magistrates. Some of these (and perhaps all) had their own secretaries and, presumably, kept their own records. Doubtless the size of the bureaucracy and the obviously greater interest in public display of inscriptions at this time was due, in large part, to Roman influence. But the books and records kept by the religious groups may have had a continuous development from earlier times. It seems likely that each of these cult groups kept its own books separately.

Other boards of magistrates known to have had their own secretaries include the ephors of Amyclae (*IG* V 1, 26—*s. ii a.*), the boule (*IG* V 1, 206—*S. I a.*), the gerontes (*IG* V 1, 92—*s. I a.*), the Tainarioi (*IG* V 1, 210 - *s. I a.*), and the hieromnemones (*IG* V 1, 168—*s. ii p.*).

By the second century A.D., a special board of officials existed which was charged with the preservation and interpretation of

the customs and laws of Lycurgus. In *IG* V 1, 500 we find a group of men referring to themselves as teachers of the laws of Lycurgus (οἱ διδάσκαλοι ἀμφὶ τὰ Λυκουργεία ἔθη). In *IG* V 1, 543 we have an example of an individual being honored as a protector of the laws of Lycurgus (τῆς περὶ τὰ Λυκούργεια ἔθη προστασίας...ἕνεκα). He (or another individual) was also referred to as a teacher. In *IG* V 1, 554 we have a *cursus honorum* of a Spartan who held, in the late second century, the office of ἐξεγητὴς τῶν Λυκουργείων ἐθῶν. Nothing is known about these interpreters, but it seems fairly certain that they held official positions within the state bureaucracy. In fact the appearance of the name of another exegete in a list of Spartan magistrates of the first century A.D. (*IG* V 1, 177) should be regarded as proof.[1]

The board was almost certainly a late creation since it was not in existence in the late third century when King Cleomenes could have benefited from its services. Instead of relying upon such a board, Cleomenes, like others before him, depended upon a foreigner for advice about the constitution of his own city. Apparently the exegetes acted much in the same capacity as Sphaerus the Borysthenite and other foreign scholars, with the major difference that by the second century A.D., this responsibility was vested in an official board of magistrates.

By the mid-third century B.C., many of the Lycurgan traditions had been forgotten and we may suppose that written records of the ancient oracles and other documents had long lain neglected.[2] The Spartans were rarely able to make use of them without the aid of outsiders.[3] Indeed, one of the major contributions made by

[1] Jacoby, *Atthis*, p. 399, addenda, ch. 1, § 2, no. 2, mentioned the Spartan exegetes but did not discuss them.

[2] Comparisons of different societies is not always helpful and is sometimes harmful, but it is interesting to consider the possible results of the loss of a single copy of an important book in an ancient society. During the reign of King Josiah of Judah (ca. 639-608 B.C.), repairs on the great temple in Jerusalem were made and, during the course of the work, a long lost book was found: "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses." Hilkiah turned the book over to a scribe who read it before the king. The latter appears never to have heard of the book or its contents despite its supposed importance in Hebrew tradition. As a result, reforms were instituted by Josiah in the eighteenth year of his reign (2 Kings 22.8; 2 Chronicles 34, 8-33). Assuming that the story is true and not mere priestly deception, the work existed in a single copy and its loss or neglect meant the loss of the tradition.

[3] But they made good use of the oracles mentioned by Herodotus (5.90), perhaps an exception?

these foreign scholars to Spartan history must have been the recovery of the contents of many ancient documents and the organization of some of them into a usable collection. At least this much is suggested by the fact that Sphaerus provided most of the details of the ancient constitution for the reforms of Cleomenes. Similarly, the reading of Dicaearchus' constitution, each year, before the youth of the city is suggestive. Nothing can be certain, but it is possible that an official collection of ancient written documents, perhaps including the oracles, was gradually created through the work of these scholars and that it was finally brought together into one place.[4] At some later date an official board of curators and interpretors of the collection was established. The responsibilities of the board must have included the care of records and books containing the details of their ancient customs. Doubtless they were the final authority in any dispute concerning the traditions.

The impression a reader of these late inscriptions might well get is of a bureaucracy very large for the size of the city it was intended to serve. We know very little of the actual business of the individual boards of magistrates, since the records of each were kept separately in local archives. Of course, something could be conjectured. Officials in charge of building and public maintenance must have required records relating to expenses and materials. In this respect, the Spartans seem to have been fairly meticulous since we see that, by the second century B.C., even the relatively minor expenses of setting up inscriptions required that a record be kept by the appropriate officials (*IG* V 1, 26). Similarly, officials in charge of athletic and musical contests probably maintained lists of winners as a minimal requirement. The records for some musical contests are at least as old as the fifth century B.C., since Hellanicus made use of a list of victors in the Carnean festival. In later times, officials probably maintained records of expenses and regulations. Sometimes these regulations were inscribed on stone, as were the rules for the Leonidea (*IG* V 18, 19, 20—*s. ii p.*).

If the actual business of most of these boards of magistrates, during the second century B.C. and later, was considered private, the names of the board members were very much a public business,

---

[4] But perhaps the collection could have been made all at one time by some notable scholar such as Sosibius. Sphaerus also had the intellectual ability for such an undertaking—and he had the personal friendship of the king.

with the result that the numerous membership lists were inscribed on stone. The occasional appearance of a *cursus honorum*, following the listing of an individual member, suggests that a major reason for the lists was vanity on the part of the officials; they wanted their names and achievements to be published and read by their townsmen.

Attitudes of individuals toward their contemporaries are important and it is evident that citizens who assumed the expense of having their achievements inscribed on stone, expected that others would be able to read the results.

One inscription (*IG* V 1, 1208), apparently erected privately by a Roman Citizen in neighboring Gytheum, spelled out in great detail, the conditions attached to his gift of 8,000 denarii. The money was to be used as a capital fund to insure a permanent supply of olive oil for the gymnasium. The donor specified that if the city officials were slack in their administration of the gift, or if they did not use the money in strict accordance with his written instructions (κατὰ τὰ γεγραμμένα), that anyone, Greek or Roman, could bring charges before the Demos of the Lacedaemonians. This accusor was to provide a written text of his charges on an appointed day. If successful, he was to receive one fourth of the money and the Lacedaemonians were to get the other 6,000 denarii. Among other provisions of the bequest, there was a requirement that three copies of the document be inscribed on stone and set up in prominent places; one was erected in the agora in front of his house, one at the Caesareion, and one at the gymnasium. The stones were to be erected so that his munificence might be known for all time to all men, citizens and foreign visitors alike.

> ἵνα καὶ πολ[ί-]
> [ταις καὶ] ξένοις εἰς αἰῶνα φανερὰ καὶ εὔγνωστος ἧ πᾶσιν [ὴ]
> [τῆς ἐμ]ῆς χάριτος φιλανθρωπία. (lines 46-48)

The inscription, written in the first person throughout, implies a belief, on the part of the benefactor, that almost anyone could read the decree. The promise of easy financial gain might have encouraged them to do so.

These late inscriptions and the archives which must have preserved the original copies, show that a great deal of written work was carried out by the various boards of officials. This does not, in itself, reveal anything about the rate of literacy in the city.

But even during the Roman period, the town was not a large one. It seems likely, even allowing for the repeated appearance of some family names in the lists,[5] that a fairly high percentage of the citizens must have served on one of these boards at some time during their lives. This in turn suggests that, at least in these very late years, literacy, in some degree, was common among Spartan citizens.

It is not possible to have so clear an indication of its extent for the earlier centuries, but it has been shown that, by the early sixth century B.C., the possibility of some degree of literacy (probably limited to the writing of votive offerings) existed for many. The evidence from the inscribed religious offerings suggests that most, if not all were inscribed by persons of the upper classes. But the casually inscribed names of men who were workers at major building sites shows that a similar degree of literacy extended to this class.

---

[5] As an example of possible domination by certain families the reader might consider a few lines of *IG* V 1, 51 and 52 (near duplicates). The inscription contains one list of ephors and one of nomophylakes. In the list of ephors is the entry Ἄλεξις Φιλοκράτους (lines 8-9) and Πασικλῆς Φιλοκράτους (lines 10-12); apparently brothers? In the same inscription, listed with the nomophylakes, are the entries Δαμοκλῆς (Δαμοκλέους) ὁ καὶ Φιλοκράτης (lines 32-34), another probable pair of brothers. There is also an Ἀλεξικράτης (Ἀλεξικράτους) το[ῦ]Λυσίππου (lines 29-31), a grandson, and Ἀριστοκλῆς Λυσίππου (lines 37-38), who may have been uncle of Ἀλεξικράτης. But it might seem unlikely for two generations to hold the same office simultaneously. Moreover the names are common and it is at least possible that none of the above named are related.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

How seriously must we take Plutarch's assertion that the Spartans did not use written laws, literature, or foreign teachers? and how are we to interpret his assertion that they learned to read just enough for their practical needs? Interpretation seems difficult since Plutarch probably did not have specific levels of achievement in mind. He was making a general statement (probably based on what he considered to be common knowledge) and simply meant that in the Spartan scale of values, literary training did not have the high position given to it by the Athenians. The Spartans gave first place to physical courage and loyalty, placing much less emphasis on "book learning." Plutarch did not distinguish between social classes, but it should be obvious that requirements varied greatly among individuals and that there must have been a steady increase in the needs of Spartan leaders corresponding to the increase in diplomatic activity, especially in the second century B.C. and later. In short, we can expect their requirements for writing skills to have been less in the early centuries when they were relatively isolated politically and extremely conservative in their customs. This does not imply a social or political vacuum of course; and it has already been shown that they made numerous treaties with other cities. It is only to say that Sparta was a relatively closed and secretive society in comparison with Athens. But even for that early period there is some evidence.

Thucydides (1.128; 8.33, 38, 40) related numerous incidents in which Spartan commanders sent and received letters. These letters are valuable as evidence for the frequency of such communications, and it seems likely that the exchanges described by Thucydides were the ordinary and regular Spartan practice. There was nothing unusual about it, and Thucydides did not regard it as especially noteworthy that a Spartan commander was literate. It has been shown (*supra* p. 33) that the use of written treaties was a regular feature of Spartan diplomacy in the fifth century and perhaps earlier. But how much literacy was sufficient for practical purposes? Ancient testimony provides no direct answer, but we may assume that letters of the type mentioned by Thucydides, to be of any use to Spartan generals, must have provided details of troop strength

and movements sufficient to meet the ever changing requirements of the military and political situation. The letter sent by the ephors to Pausanias (Thuc. 1.131) was simple and merely ordered him to return to Sparta. The letter quoted in 1.128 was somewhat more complicated but still basically simple.

It is impossible to determine the details of the exchange of letters between Pedaritos, Astyochos, and the authorities in Sparta, but the letter described by Thucydides (8.33), must have been complex enough to describe the movements of the ex-captives coming from Samos to Erythrae as well as the military and, perhaps, even the political implications of the situation. We may also assume, with some confidence, that the letters sent by Pedaritos to Sparta (Thuc. 8.38) must have given enough detail about the political activities of Astyochos to have some chance of convincing the ephors that the charges against him were true. Obviously then, the requirements of literacy for a Spartan military commander were considerable; he had to be able to read and write complex military language.

The inferences drawn from the probable contents of letters sent and received by Spartan generals has provided a few hints about the reading and writing skills of this class. The treaties quoted by Thucydides (5.18; 5.77) are also suggestive. These treaties were complicated and it is clear that the Spartan leaders must have been skilled diplomats and that they possessed the required degree of literacy. But what about the practical requirements of the other Spartans? This is more difficult, but it has been argued that since all Spartan citizens received the same education from boyhood, all, presumably, learned to write and to read. This may be true, but the critical point is that some of them developed their skills to a high level because of the requirements of their official duties, while the vast majority probably forgot all or most of whatever they may have learned; they had no reason to do otherwise.

It is obvious that these are only hints and, in the absence of other evidence, it seems quite impossible to discover the details of individual literacy. We may, however, get some idea of general requirements by consideration of the question, What did the ordinary Spartan have to read? The answer, for the earlier centuries, is: not much, if anything. The kings had collections of oracles in their homes, but it is unlikely that ordinary citizens saw or read them. Choral poetry was popular in Sparta from an early date, but this was a matter of public performance rather than private reading.

On the other hand, it is apparent that written collections of the lyric poets existed and, at least in the later centuries, were available for use by scholars such as Sosibius the grammarian. Doubtless, such scholars had private copies of some books.

Reference has already been made to the Spartan festivals which were accompanied by the songs of local poets, and to the probable existence of written texts of such songs (*supra* p. 43). Similarly we know that Homer was appreciated and that there was a tradition which claimed the existence of written copies in Sparta. But all of these things were probably available to most Spartans only through oral recitations and public performances. For the most intelligent of them there were, allegedly, copies of the works of Isocrates and perhaps of other writers (*supra* p. 44). But this does not necessarily mean that the ordinary person in Sparta had or could use such books. The specification that the most intelligent Spartans had the books probably meant people who were leaders in the state —generals, and kings.

What then, does this leave for the ordinary citizen to write or read? Nothing but his own votive inscriptions and perhaps the more elaborate inscriptions of persons such as Damonon (*IG* V 1, 213).

Nevertheless, the impression which has emerged is consistent from the sixth century on, and as far as the ordinary citizen is concerned, that impression is a poor one. The three political pamphlets written early in the fourth century which (apart from the early poets) comprised the city's entire literary production down to the second century B.C., and the periodic Spartan reliance on foreign scholars for written interpretations of their own traditions, bear eloquent testimony to the depressed intellectual climate of the city. But dullness of the creative instinct is not the same thing as illiteracy. The Spartans did learn their letters if they wished to do so, and they were literate to a degree. But their "literacy" was, in most cases, limited to writing, on votive offerings, inscriptions consisting of personal names and the name of the deity (both often barely legible). Some were highly skilled as writers (of names) and produced fine work. Others, less successful, were truly illiterate. Some did not seem to realize the fact of their own illiteracy as in the case of the man who could do no more than to inscribe his offering with meaningless scratches (pl. III no. I - *s. v a.**). In short, and to put the best face on the matter, literacy had more

breadth than depth in the centuries prior to the Roman period.

But the evidence of the activities of the later bureaucracy suggests that during the years of Roman influence, the Spartans experienced a very rapid growth in the quantity of written work done by the magistracies. The same period saw a great proliferation of publicly displayed *cursus honorum* and other honorary inscriptions which serve to illustrate the generally changed climate in the city, now so much more open to travellers and engaged in so many diplomatic enterprises.

Finally we may ask, what did Plutarch mean when he said that the Spartans learned to read and write just well enough for their practical needs? Perhaps even Plutarch himself could not tell us for sure, but if pressed for an answer, he might reply: "Which Spartan? When?" Obviously, people have different needs. Thibron must write his constitution, Lysander must forge his oracles, and Sosibius must write his commentary on Alcman. Others must write their business contracts and falsify their accounts as Isocrates noted (*supra* p. 75). But most were probably content with an occasional votive offering. The difference was in the practice, and Plutarch was right—or at least not wrong. The Spartans did learn to read for practical purposes, but the requirements of the Kappa writer were far different from those of Lysander, Thibron, Sosibius, or the many officials, generals, and business men who regularly used writing for their several purposes.

APPENDIX

A SELECT CATALOGUE OF INSCRIPTIONS LATE SEVENTH THROUGH FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

The following catalogue is intended to serve a dual purpose—as a convenient means of reference within the main body of this monograph, and as a representative sample of the types of writing on public display in Archaic Sparta. The list is not exhaustive but does include the great majority of inscribed objects from the immediate vicinity of Sparta. Only in a few cases have I included inscriptions found at Delphi, Olympia, or even as near as Gytheion. This restriction was adopted chiefly in the interest of brevity, but also in the belief that my purpose would be served adequately in this way.

References to scholarly works outside of *IG* V 1 are to the principal or first publications; no attempt has been made to provide a comprehensive bibliography since additional references, when they exist, may be found in the relevant volumes of *SEG*.

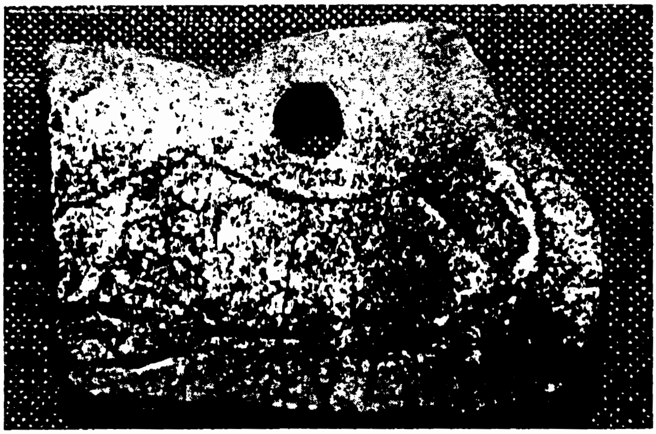
Most references to dates are to those assigned by the original editors of the various inscriptions. Sometimes an alternative date suggested by another scholar is given and, in a very few cases, I have suggested my own date. Sometimes I have offered a different interpretation; these are so identified. Many dates, especially those based entirely upon letter forms should be regarded as uncertain; this is especially true of the inscribed sherds. Nevertheless it is hoped that the proposed dates may serve as a general guide and that the reader will be able to form an overall impression of the types and numbers of inscriptions being produced by the Spartans from the earliest known writing down to the end of the fifth century B.C.

As a rule I have attempted to examine each inscription discussed; but this has not been possible in every case.

Inscriptions from the Seventh and Sixth Centuries B.C.

Numbers 1 through 22 are fragments of small limestone plaques found in the Orthia shrine. Most bear remains of figures in relief. Hondius and Woodward dated the plaques on the basis of their

Cat. no. 3



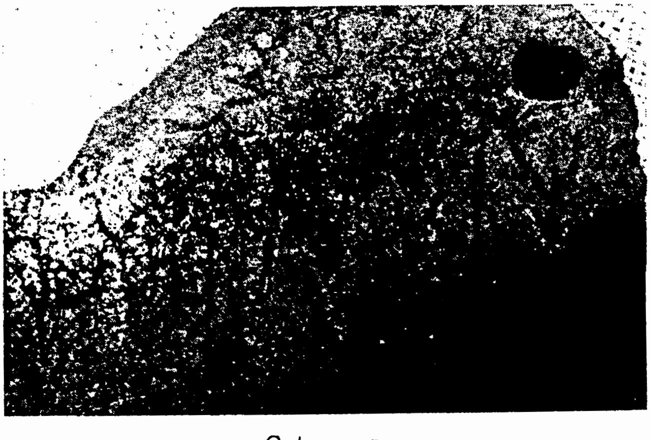
Cat. no. 12

Cat. no. 13

PLATE II

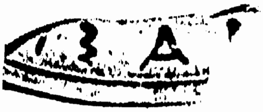
Cat. no. 8

Cat. no. 11



Cat. no. 14

80

79 

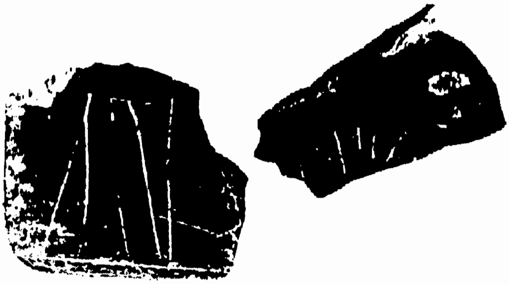
66

67

75

26

76



I

181

name as Epanidas (Ἐπανίδας τᾶι Παρ[θέν/οι (?) μ' ἀν]έθ(ε)κε ϝορθα[ίαι(?)].

9. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 90, no. 2. A fragment of a limestone plaque showing horse's head in relief. Only three or four letters remain of an apparent dedication to Orthia.

10. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 92, no. 4. A fragment from the upper left corner of limestone plaque. Horse shown in relief with portion of the dedication.

11. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 93, no. 6*. A fragment of a limestone plaque showing part of horse's leg (?) in relief. The inscription, perhaps by a father and son (...]ο υος και[...) is remarkable for the absence of initial aspirate.

12. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 94, no. 7*. A fragment of a limestone plaque showing hind quarters of a crouching lion. The name of the dedicator (Τροῦθος) is incised retrograde.

13. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 94, no. 8*. A complete limestone plaque showing boar in relief. The unfinished name of the dedicator is incised retrograde; apparently the same as the preceding. See *infra* no. 26 which may also have been dedicated by this individual.

14. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 95, no. 9*. A fragment of a limestone plaque showing hind quarters of lion. The name of the dedicator (Χισιμίδας) was inscribed retrograde above the figure. Hondius and Woodward thought that the four-stroke Sigma was an advanced form for *fin. s. vi a.*, but see photo, pl. 11, no. 14 which clearly shows straight lines.

15. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 99, no. 14. A fragment of a limestone plaque showing part of an incised name—perhaps it was Χάρτυλος.

16. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 99, no. 15. A fragment of a limestone plaque complete except for slight damage at upper left corner. Figure of man and woman, standing and facing each other with rake or similar object between them, is shown in relief. The incised name, partly lost in the damaged portion, was Ἀν]τίδας, or something similar.

17. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 100, no. 16. A very small fragment of a limestone plaque. Traces of a name remain.

18. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 101, no. 18. A small fragment of a limestone plaque. Only two letters remain; a long stroke which may have been Iota and a very doubtful Alpha.

19. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 101, no. 19. A fragment of a limestone plaque. The remaining portion shows six or seven letters arranged in a curious order, now unintelligible.

20. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 102, no. 21. A limestone plaque showing part of a female figure in relief. Three incised letters remain.

21. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 102, no. 22. A limestone statuette of a priestess(?). The letters αρτεο incised on breast and επαριεπ on the back.

22. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 100, no. 17. A very small fragment of a limestone plaque. A few traces of a name remain.

23. *IG* V 1, 224, *fin. s. vii a.* (Kolbe), 600-550 B.C. (Jeffery, p. 199, no. 13). Found near the Menelaion. A dedicatory inscription on a small piece of limestone. The stone is unbroken but the inscribed name appears to be incomplete. Woodward (*BSA* 15 [1908-09], p. 87, no. 91) suggested that the name Ἀρτά[μιτος] was continued on another stone. The stone cutter, almost illiterate, inscribed Mu in place of the second Alpha; he was then able to correct his mistake by producing a ligature.

24. *IG* V 1, 252b, *fin. s vii a.* (Jeffery, p. 198, no. 1). Found at the Orthia shrine. An Ivory plaque with a representation of a manned warschip. It was dedicated to Orthia; her name was spelled with Phi inscribed, mistakenly, for Theta. Perhaps the writer was not sufficiently experienced so that he could distinguish between the two symbols.

25. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 105, fig. 1, no. 28, *fin. s. vii a.* Found at the Orthia shrine. A fragment of a platter with black interior and purple center. The letters are well made with dark paint; two holes for hanging the dedication are preserved.

26. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 105, fig. 1, no. 29*, *fin. s. vii a.* (Hondius and Woodward). From the Orthia shrine. A small fragment of a black-glazed vase. Three letters are preserved (ΘΟΣ) = Τροῦθος(?) as in nos. 12 and 13.

27. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 105, fig. 1, no. 30, *fin. s. vii a.* A fragment of a platter with inscription in white paint. Woodward suggested that the dedication was made by a woman named Worithisa (Ϝριθίσα). Spellings used in the rest of the dedication may suggest that the unusual form of the name is due to the semi-literate state of the dedicator. Ἀ[νέ]θιxε and hιρόν (= hιαρόν) are unknown in other Laconian inscriptions.

28. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 105, fig. 1, no. 31, *init. s. vi a.* A small fragment of pottery with dedication to Orthia in pink paint.

29. *IG* V 1, 216, *ca. 550-525 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 199, no. 21). From the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A halter of white marble dedicated by Κλεοχά[ρες].

30. *IG* V 1, 1561, *med. s. vi a.* 600-550 (Jeffery, p. 199, no. 12). Found at Olympia. A fragment of a bronze plate with dedication made by an unknown person who identified himself as a Spartiate.

31. *IG* V 1, 1497, *ca. 550-525 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 199, no. 18). A bronze cymbal dedicated to the Limnian.

32. *IG* V 1, 1570, *med. s. vi a.* (Dickins, *BSA* 13 [1906-07], p. 150). Found near temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A Panathenaic amphora dedicated to Athena. The vase is finely painted showing a scene of Athena Promachos with spear and shield. A four-horse chariot finishing a race is depicted on the other side.

33. *IG* V 1, 222, *ca. 530-500 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 199, no. 22). Found near the Leonidaion. A stele of gray marble with ram's horns sculpted in relief above the inscription. It is a metrical dedication to Apollo by Aiglatas who had won five victories in the dolichos and three in the makros.

34. *BSA* 29 (1927-28), p. 45, no. 69, *ca. 530-500 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 199, no. 23). A gray marble stele inscribed on three sides within guidelines. Woodward interpreted the inscription as a metrical dedication, perhaps a hymn. He suggested that it is one of the earliest from Sparta and that it might have been composed by a poet of note, perhaps Alkman or Gitiadas. Jeffery described it as a victory dedication.

35. *IG* V 1, 215, *ca. 525-500 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 200, no. 27). Found in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A limestone stele with a figure in relief. The female figure holds unidentifiable objects in each hand. The inscribed name is Ϝαναξίβιος.

36. *IG* V 1, 244, *ca. 525 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 200, no. 26). Found in a Byzantine tomb near Sparta. A fragment of blue marble inscribed with the name Chilon ([Χ]ίλον). Woodward (*BSA* 15 [1908-09], p. 80, no. 86) and Kolbe interpreted it as a dedication to the hero of that name. Pausanias (3.16.4) said that a cult of the hero existed in Sparta.

37. *IG* V 1, 699, *s. vi a.* Found near the Menelaion. A limestone stele with the name 'Ελέφας inscribed. Woodward (*BSA* 15 [1908-09], p. 86, no. 89) suggested that it was a grave marker but the name is much like others which are more likely to have been masons' marks; cf. nos. 38, 39, and 40.

38 and 39. *IG* V 1, 832, *s. vi a.* (Jeffery, p. 200, no. 32). Found at Amyclae. Two small pieces of white marble, each inscribed with a name—Γλαῦχς and "Αρμος (aspirate omitted). Tod, nos. 785 and 786 suggested that they were masons' marks since the inscribed surfaces were left in the rough and not meant to be seen. Jeffery also thought they were masons' marks.

40. *IG* V 1, 823, *s. vi a.* (Jeffery, p. 200, no. 32). Found at Amyclae. A fragment of gray marble with the name Τέχναρχος. Jeffery suggested that this stone, along with the two preceding, was an architectural block from the throne of Apollo at Amyclae; the name is that of a mason.

41. *IG* V 1, 700, *s. vi a.* Found in Sparta. A fragment of limestone inscribed with the names Διοhικέτα Διωλευθερί[ω]; a son and father(?).

42. *IG* V 1, 825, *s. vi a.* A small marble tablet inscribed with the name Πολλεῖον.

43. *IG* V 1, 826, *s. vi a.* Marble fragment with two roughly inscribed letters—ΛΕ (retrograde). Kolbe listed the stone with the grave markers but offered no explanation. The right and bottom edges are complete; but additional letters could have appeared in the broken portion on the left or right side. Perhaps this is another example of a grave inscription similar to no. 110 (*s. v a.*) which has the word λεχόι, and to *IG* V 1, 714 which also has a feminine name—'Αγιππία λεχόι. (Hellenistic). These were probably grave stones for women who died in child birth.

44. *IG* V 1, 824, *s. vi a.* Found at Mistra. A fragment of gray marble which Kolbe, following Hiller, described as a metrical grave stone for Υρμιναία which, if correct, provides another example of the omission of initial aspirate.

45. *IG* V 1, 457, *s. vi a.* Found near Magoula. A dedication on gray marble. A youth (Theokles) is portrayed in relief, standing, spear in left hand, fruit in right hand extended toward a serpent. The dedicators referred to themselves as the "Koroi," apparently equivalent to the "Knights."

46. *IG* V 1, 720, *s. vi a.* Found in Sparta. A marble stele inscribed within incised guide lines. It was interpreted by Kolbe as a funeral stele for Glakatias set up by Kalas, son of Anthida. Possible traces of an artist's signature may be seen in the last line. Jeffery, p. 193, no. 31, described it as a victory dedication.

47. *IG* V 1, 238, *s. vi a,* Found at Magoula. A fragment of a dedication to Zeus Aigiochos by a victorious athlete.

48. *IG* V 1, 2, *s. vi a.* Found at Mistra. A fragment of blue marble listed by Kolbe with public documents. No sense can be made of the text but Jeffery, p. 201, no. 42, described it as a victory dedication.

49. *BSA* 27 (1925-26), p. 249, no. 37, *fin. s. vi a.* A fragment of a gray marble base inscribed with a victory dedication to Athena. The writing is within guide lines and has the first line inverted.

50. *BSA* 27 (1925-26), p. 253, no. 40, *s. vi a.* From the Acropolis. A fragment of soft limestone inscribed with a list of eight names on eight lines. The names are arranged in pairs with dividing lines after every second name. Woodward suggested that they designate fathers and sons. If so the patronymic comes first in the combination as in the pair Δαμοξενίδα 'Αλκίπος. Woodward also noted that each pair of names was inscribed or scratched onto the stone by a different individual. There is variation not only in letter shapes but also in their size and depth. Lines 5 and 6 appear to have been cut more deeply and by a more skilled person than lines 7 and 8 or 1 and 2. Jeffery, p. 195, no. 44, described it as a list of victors in local games.

51. *IG* V 1, 234, *s. vi a.* From the Menelaion. A fragment of gray marble, restored by Woodward (*BSA* 15 [1908-09], p. 88, no. 86) to read [H]ελε[ναι].

52. *IG* V 1, 919, *ca. 525 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 200, no. 24). Found at Sellasia. A stele of gray marble with a portrayal of the Tyndaridai in relief. The dedication was made by Plestiadas to the Dioskoroi.

53. *IG* V 1, 1562, *s. vi a.* From Olympia. A round marble statue base inscribed with a dedication to Olympian Zeus.

54. *BSA* 27 (1925-26), p. 251, no. 39. A halter (jumping weight) dedicated to Athena by Paitiadas (Pasitiadas?).

55. *BSA* 27 (1925-26), p. 250, no. 38, *fin. s. vi a.* A four sided stele of gray marble inscribed with a dedication to Athena.

56. *IG* V 1, 828, *s. vi a.* Found near the Leonidaion. A fragment of white marble. The letters include some un-Laconian forms including a type of Chi similar to Sicyonian Epsilon (X̱̄). Psi is represented by the symbol normally used for Chi in early Spartan inscriptions. Even though the letters are reasonably distinct, no one has been able to offer a convincing interpretation. Tod, no. 200, called it "an unsolved riddle." Jeffery, p. 184, said "the inscription itself appears meaningless in Greek."

57. *IG* V 1, 362, *s. vi a.* From the Roman circus. Two fragments of a vessel made of marble. Woodward (*BSA* 14 [1907-08], p. 111, no. 8), interpreted the inscription as a part of an instruction for the conduct of a ritual—"pour twice with wine."

58. *IG* V 1, 357, *fin. s. vi a.* A fragment of gray marble inscribed with very large letters (Sigma = .088). Kolbe described it as a dedication to Zeus. This assumes the possibility of the name in the nominative case. Jeffery, p. 201, no. 47, suggested that it was a list of names. The fragmentary condition of the stone makes reliable interpretation impossible, but the nominative word endings ευς and οφας suggest that Jeffery was right.

59. *BSA* 24, (1919-21), p. 119ff., no. 70, *s. vi a.* From the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment of a Panathenaic amphora. The letters are incised on the vase below the painted scenes. Part of the name Athena is preserved.

60. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 119ff., no. 71, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment of a vase with the single letter Alpha.

61. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 119ff., no. 72, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment of a vase with the letters AI preserved.

62. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 119ff., no. 73, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment of a black glazed bowl with remains of the dedication to Athena, . . . δαι ἀνέθε[κε].

63. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 119ff., no. 94, *fin. s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A small fragment of a cup. The letters were written with pen and ink; part of the name Athena is preserved.

64. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 119ff., no. 95, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A small fragment of a cup. The letters are written with pen and ink and are similar in style and size to those of the preceding example.

65. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 119ff., no. 96, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment from the rim of a large platter. The letters were written with pen and ink, apparently by the same person responsible for the two preceding. The entire name Athena is preserved.

66. *BSA* 30 (1929-30), p. 242, fig. 1, no. 20*, *ca.* 500 *B.C.* From the Acropolis. A fragment of a vase with remains of a painted inscription—['A]θαναία[ι].

67. *BSA* 30 (1929-30), p. 242, fig. 1, no. 21*, *ca.* 500 *B.C.* From the Acropolis. A fragment of a vase with the remains of a dedication—. . .]ολος 'Αθανα[ίαι]. As possibilities for the dedicator's name Woodward suggested [Π]ῶλος, [-Β]ολος, and ['Αγκίμ]ολος. Considering the similarities of style, date and proximity, Woodward thought that it was possible that all five dedications (nos. 63-67) were made by the same person.

68. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117ff., no. 97, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A small clay loom weight. The piece is complete but has only two letters incised—HA.

69. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117ff., no. 98, *s.vi.a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment from the rim of a platter. The letters, in dark brown paint, preserve part of the name Athena.

70. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117ff., no. 81, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A small fragment from the rim of a black glazed vase inscribed with the letters Βασιλίδ[ας(?)].

71. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117ff., no. 82, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment from the rim of a platter similar to the preceding. The incised letters B]αhιλ[ίδας (?) are preserved.

72. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117ff., no. 83, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A very small fragment of a black-glazed cup with the inscription Bα]hιλί[δας (?).

73. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117ff., no. 84, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A small fragment from the rim of a cup inscribed with the name (?) Bα]hι[λίδας (?).

74. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117ff., no. 99, *s. vi a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment of a black-glazed cup with the name [B]ασιλί[δας] preserved in white paint. Since the piece is contemporary with the four preceding examples, and since all were found in close proximity, it is possible that all five were the dedications of the same individual.

75. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 248, fig. 4, no. 2*, *ca. 500 B.C.* From the Acropolis. A fragment of tile, black-glazed, with the inscription incised on two lines. The first line has the letters ...]ερ...μτοξ[.... Line two has the letters αϜοσειεhοικατ..., interpreted by Woodward as a prayer for a safe return; *supra* p. 10.

76. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 251, no. 2* (no illustration), *init. vi a.* Acropolis. A small fragment of a cup with the remains of an incised inscription—Μέτριος/ἐγό/'Αλκ̣[... Woodward did not copy the last three letters which may be remains of owner's name in the genitive case. Words are divided by vertical strokes (cf. no. 81 *infra*; p. 10 *supra*).

77. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 248, fig. 4, no. 4, *ca. 500 B.C.* Acropolis, Two fragments of a large vessel. Part of a dedication, in large, poorly formed letters is preserved—ἀνέ]θκε. The unskilled dedicator forgot to write Epsilon after Theta.

78. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 248, fig. 4, no. 6, *fin. s. vi a.* Acropolis. A fragment of a Panathenaic amphora with only two letters preserved ...EI; Epsilon of Jeffery's type one.

79. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 242, fig. 1, no. 5*, *fin. vi a.* Acropolis. A small fragment of a vase with remains of the dedication ...ΙΣΑ ...; five-stroke Sigma.

80. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 242, fig. 1, no. 11*, *s. vi a.* Acropolis. A fragment of a vase with three letters of the inscription ...ΙΣΑ... with five-stroke Sigma as in the preceding; apparently not written by the same hand.

81. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 242, fig. 1, no. 22, *s. vi a.* Acropolis. A small fragment of a vase with the remains of the dedication

. . . ιος / μ' [ἀνέθεκε]. The vertical stroke after Sigma was described by Woodward as decorative, but see no. 76 for an apparently deliberate use of word division.

82. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 249, fig. 5, no. 14, *fin. s. vi a.* Acropolis. A fragment of a cup with the letters Βα[σιλίδας?].

83. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 249, fig. 5, no. 17, *s. vi a.* Acropolis. A small fragment of a cup with the letters hι = [Βα]hι[λίδας(?)].

84. *BSA* 30 (1929-39), p. 251, fig. 6, no. 21, *s. vi a.* Acropolis. A fragment of a vase with the remains of a painted inscription [Βα]hιλίδ[ας] (?). It is possible that this piece and the two preceding were offered by the dedicator of nos. 70-74.

85. *BSA* 28 (1926-27), p. 70, fig. 13a, *fin. s. vi a.* Acropolis. A small fragment of a vase with the remains of a dedication to Athena.

86. *BSA* 26 (1923-25), p. 273, no. 6, *s. vi a.* Acropolis. A large plaque of rectangular shape (.41 × .08 × .002 M). The letters range from .055 to .06. The single word Χαλκεῖα is preserved but the plaque is cut off on the left end and may have had more writing there. Nail holes are preserved and Woodward suggested that the plaque was nailed to a wooden platform or altar on which were placed bronze votive offerings. He noted that the word must be the plural of Χαλκεῖον which normally means "work shop" or "forge," but stated that here it must mean "bronze objects." He cited no parallels for such a meaning and *LSJ* offer none. Is it possible then, that the plaque could be something else? Perhaps a workshop sign? The size of the letters (among the largest from Sparta) would be appropriate for this purpose. But I can find no parallels for this use either.

87. *IG* V 1, 225, *s. vi a.* Found at Mistra. Bronze cymbal inscribed with a dedication to the Limnian.

88. *IG* V 1, 226. Exterior of the preceding. The dedication is by Prianthis to the Limnian. Strabo (8.363) said that Artemis was worshipped by that name in Messenia and that there was a temple for her in Sparta.

89. *IG* V 1, 1563, *fin. s. vi a.* Found at Olympia. Two fragments of a bronze vessel dedicated by the Spartiates—[Τ]οὶ Σπαρτιᾶτα[ι].

90. *IG* V 1, 252a, *s. vi a.* Orthia shrine. A six-sided bronze die inscribed with the dedication Ταῖ Ϝροθαίαι.

91. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 102, no. 24, *s. vi a.* Found near the Orthia shrine. A bronze die with the inscribed dedication ελευ. The inscription is complete and Hondius and Woodward suggested that it was an abbreviation for Eleusiai or Eleusias. The question of the appropriateness of such an offering has not been solved.

92. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 103, no. 26, *s. vi a.* From the Orthia shrine. A fragment of an ivory flute with the name Ἀχραδαῖος from ἀχράς = ἀχλάς (a wild-pear tree).

93. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 104, no. 27, *s. vi a.* From the Orthia shrine. A fragment of an ivory flute with an incised dedication—Ταῖ ϝορθά, another example of the dative singular termination without final iota.

94. Ἀρχ. Ἐφ. (1919), p. 33, no. 3, *s. vi a.* A white marble slab inscribed with the name Damokrinios; perhaps a tombstone.

95. Ἀρχ. Ἐφ. (1919), p. 33, no. 4, *s. vi a.* A white marble slab with the name Hiasis; perhaps a tombstone.

Inscriptions from the Fifth Century B.C.

96. *IG* V 1, 213, *med. s. v a.* One half found in the monastery of the Forty Martyrs and the second half in the foundations of a late Roman building on the Acropolis, near the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A large stele of white marble inscribed with the well known victory list of Damonon and his family. The long list of victories is preceded by a metrical dedication to Athena.

97. *IG* V 1, 1, *ca. 427 B.C.* Formerly in church of St. Basil, now in the Sparta museum. A fragment of blue marble stele inscribed with a list of contributions for the Peloponnesian war. Fourmont copied two sides of this inscription (in 1730) but side two, which listed two gifts by the Melians and one by a private citizen, has been destroyed.

98. *IG* V 1, 219, *s. v a.*, last quarter. Found near temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A fragment of a white marble stele. Long considered to be a metrical dedication, it was recently described by Jeffery, p. 197 (and followed by Meiggs-Lewis, *G.H.I.*, p. 183 and *SEG* 25 [1971], no. 421) as a part of the preceding contributions list. Closer examination has shown that this identification is not possible. First of all because of the different marble types; but also because of a very different style of lettering. Indeed this text was inscribed by two different hands, perhaps at different times. Jeffery was correct in recognizing a war contributions list, but there are really two separate lists.

99. *IG* V 1, 1564, *fin. s. v a.* From Delos. A stele of white marble inscribed with a decree. Apparently it provided for the post war status of certain temples on the island. There is no indication that a copy was set up in Sparta.

100. *IG* V 1, 1155, *init. v a.* At Gytheion. An inscription cut into the living rock at the base of a hill. Apparently it prohibited the removal of stone from the sacred area.

101. *Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, vol. 65, no. 3 (1974), p. 3ff., s. v a.*, last quarter. Found in the Sparta museum by W. Peek. A stele of blue marble inscribed with a treaty between the Spartans, Aetolians, and Erxadieoi. The stone is broken at upper left corner and along the entire right side (approximately 1/3). Twenty-two lines of the text are preserved. The treaty prescribed friendship, peace and alliance between the Spartans and Aetolians. They were to have the same friends and enemies and the Aetolians were to follow the leadership of the Spartans on land and on sea. The treaty was not to be dissolved without the consent of the Spartans; fugitives were not to be sheltered. The Spartans and Erxadieoi were to give all-out aid in the event of an enemy attack on the territory of either city.

Peek suggested that these Aetolians and Erxadieoi (perhaps a related subsidiary?) may have been inhabitants of Messenia or of the land across the Corinthian Gulf.

102. *IG* V 1, 214, *init. s. v a.* From Magoula. A blue marble statuette of a man seated in a chair. Animals are on each side. The inscription consists of a single word—'Αϊδεύς.

103. *IG* V 1, 217, From the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A limestone base with the remains of a single word [Συρ]ακουσίον where Qoppa is used in place of Kappa. This letter is not attested in Laconian except in an abecedarium on a bronze crater found in France and attributed to Laconia (Joffroy, *Rev. de Phil.*, 27 [1953], p. 175ff.). Woodward (*BSA* 14 [1908-09], p. 137, no. 63) suggested that Syracusans dedicated it to Athena.

104. *IG* V 1, 218, *fin. s. v a.* Found in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. The lower part of a gray marble stele with a dedication to Athena.

105. *IG* V 1, 696, *s. v a.* Found in the wall of a house at Mistra. A block of blue marble with the word ἐπιέhε = ἐποίεhε; perhaps a part of a builder's mark.

106. *IG* V 1, 697, *s. v a.* Found at the Menelaion. A block of blue marble with traces of two names, one nominative and the other in the genitive case. These are followed by the word [ἐποίε]hε.

107. *IG* V 1, 701, *s. v a.* Found at Magoula. A block of gray marble with a funeral inscription for a soldier who died in battle—Αἴνετος ἐν πολέμοι. Perhaps from the Peloponessian war.

108. *IG* V 1, 702, *431-403 B.C.* (Jeffery, p. 201, no. 59). A stele of gray marble with a funeral inscription for a fallen soldier—Hαιρήh[ιππος] ἐν πολ[έμοι]. Here the sign H is used for the aspirate, the letter Eta and Sigma.

109. *IG* V 1, 706, *s. v a.* Copied by Fourmont near Sparta. The

text is difficult but may have been a grave stone similar to the preceding—for Deinagoras.

110. *IG* V 1, 713, *s. v a.* Found in the church of St. Nikolaos at at Parori. A grave marker of blue marble. Only one word is preserved—Λεχόι written retrograde. Kolbe suggested that this is a grave stone for a woman who died in child birth. Cf. no. 40 *supra* and *IG* V 1, 714 (of Hellenistic date?). The latter has the words Ἀγιππία λεχόι.

111. *IG* V 1, 721, *s. v a.* A stele of white marble, broken on right side and at the top. A metrical grave marker for a soldier killed at Tanagra (in 457 B.C.).

112. *IG* V 1, 722, *s. v a.* Known only from Fourmont's copy. The inscription has always been interpreted as a metrical grave marker, perhaps by a widow on behalf of her husband—ὅς ἔθεκε μὲ χέραν. More recently A. J. Beattie reinterpreted the text as a sacred law of the Obe Arkalon (*supra* p. 29f and note 22).

113. *IG* V 1, 239b, *s. v a.* Found near the great altar in Sparta. A gray marble stele with remains of eight lines of the original inscription. Hiller's connection of this stone with no. 239a is wrong since it was based on a reading of the text of 239b which omitted several letters from the left edge. Attempts to attach it to *IG* V 1, 253 are also incorrect as can be seen by a comparison of letter forms. The purpose of this inscription is unknown, but it is possible that it was another list of victors; it has sufficient length and the words καὶ το[... may be seen in line 6.

114. *IG* V 1, 253, *init. v a.* A small fragment of a blue marble stele. It seems fairly certain that a letter read as Delta by Tillyard and Kolbe is an archaic form of Upsilon (Jeffery type 1); hence my earlier date. Perhaps this inscription was by a victor in the Hyakinthia? The word ἐνίκ[ε (?)] is visible. See nos. 11, 39 and 44 *supra* for possible examples of the omission of initial aspirate in Sparta. Definitely not part of the preceding.

115. *IG* V 1, 1589, *s. v a.* Found in a private house in Sparta. A block of gray marble with a metrical dedication. The names Πατλοκρος and Εὐθύδαμος are preserved.

116. *IG* V 1 1590, *s. v a.* Found near the monastery Zerbitsa. The names Δεσπόσιος and Παλαμõνος are preserved.

117-143. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 105, fig. 1, *s. v a.* ("down to ca. 400 B.C."—Woodward). From the Orthia shrine. Twenty-seven vase fragments inscribed with dedications to Orthia; most are painted. Few have more than two or three letters preserved. Of special interest is no. 35 which has Tau in place of Theta—ἀνέτ[εκε], and nos. 58a, b, c on which the inscription TPA seems to be com-

plete. Perhaps, as Woodward and Hondius suggested, an abbreviation for some such name as Τράχαλος.

144. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 117, no. 66, *s. v a.* From the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. A bronze bell dedicated to Athena by Ϝειράνα = Εἰρήνη.

145. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 118, no. 67, *s. v a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A bell similar to the preceding. Remains of a dedication to Athena.

146. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 118, no. 68, *s. v a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A bronze bell with faint traces of letters.

147. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 118, no. 69, *init. s. v a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A bronze cow with very difficult inscription. Probably a dedication but Hondius and Woodward were unable to agree on an interpretation and the text remains uncertain.

148-154. *BSA* 24 (1919-21), p. 119ff., fig. 3, *s. v a.* Athena Chalkioikos. Of twenty-five inscribed sherds from this group, perhaps six or seven are to be assigned to the fifth century (nos. 74, 88, 89, 91, 101, 102, 103). Of these, none is complete and most consist of one or two letters only. The longest is no. 74 which has the letters ...ἀνέθεκ]ε τ' Αθαναίαι and is from the first part of the century.

155. *BSA* 26 (1923-25), p. 234, no. 27, *s. v a.* Found north of Acropolis. A gray marble slab with incised representations of dancing men and the name Κνῦμον.

156. *BSA* 26 (1923-25), p. 271, no. 5, *s. v a.* Acropolis. A bronze mirror inscribed with a dedication to Athena by Εὐόνυμα.

157. *BSA* 26 (1923-25), p. 273, no. 7, *init. s. v a.* Athena Chalkioikos. A bronze bell dedicated to Athena by 'Ενπεδοκλέες. Peculiarities include a reversed Sigma, a correction in spelling, and the uncontracted form of the dedicator's name. The name itself is otherwise unknown in Sparta.

158. 'Αρχ. 'Εφ. (1919), p. 33, no. 2, *s. v a.* A fragment of white marble with remains of a few letters—[Ϝε]ργανᾶν (as read by A. Skias). This was probably a dedication to Athena Ϝεργάνη (Paus. 3.17.4).

159. 'Αρχ. 'Εφ. (1919), p. 33, no. 6, *s. v a.* A fragment of a white marble stele with traces of four letters.

160. 'Αρχ. 'Εφ. (1919), p. 33, no. 7, *s. v a.* A fragment of white marble with the letters ...λοφ...; a dedication *IG* V 1, 831 (*s. vi a.*) has the letters ...λοφι...

161-180. *BSA* 30 (1928-30), p. 241ff., fig. 1, *s. v a.* From the

Acropolis. Of twenty-three inscribed sherds in this group, perhaps twenty are from the fifth century. Most preserve a few letters only, and no new dedicator's name is recognizable. The only one even nearly complete consists of a single Theta; no other letter followed. It is possible that it was an abbreviation—[A]θ. (no. 7). Other abbreviations of the name Athena are known with a single Alpha.

181. *BSA* 30 (1928-30), p. 248, fig. 4, no. 5*, *s. v a.* Acropolis. A small fragment of a large vase inscribed with eight Kappas and one Eta written directly above. This piece was thought by Woodward to be the votive offering of an illiterate person. But see *supra* p. 12 for my own interpretation. The date of this piece is very uncertain.

INDEX

INSCRIPTIONS LISTED IN CATALOGUE

IG V 1	*Cat. no.*
1	97
2	48
213	96
214	102
215	35
216	29
217	103
218	104
219	98
222	33
224	23
225	87
226	88
234	51
238	47
239b	113
244	36
252	8
252a	90
252b	24
253	114
357	58
362	57
457	45
696	105
697	106

BSA 24, p. 89ff.	*Cat. no.*
1	8
2	9
3	7
4	10
5	1
6	11
7	12
8	13
9	14
10	2
11	3
12	4
13	5
14	15
15	16
16	17

IG V 1	*Cat. no.*
699	37
700	41
701	107
702	108
706	109
713	110
720	46
721	111
722	112
823	40
824	44
825	42
826	43
828	56
832	38 & 39
919	52
1155	100
1497	31
1561	30
1562	53
1563	89
1564	99
1570	32
1589	115
1590	116

BSA 24, p. 105, fig. 1	*Cat. no.*
(minus nos. 28-31, 59, 60)	117-143
28	25
29	26
30	27
31	28

BSA 24, p. 120, fig. 3	
(nos. 74, 88, 89, 91, 101, 102, 103)	148-154

BSA 24, p. 117	
66	144
67	145
68	146
69	147
70	59

17	22
18	18
19	19
20	6
21	20
22	21
24	91
26	92
27	93
BSA 26, p. 234	*Cat. no.*
27	155
BSA 26, p. 270	
1	86
BSA 26, p. 271	
5	156
BSA 26, p. 273	
7	157
BSA 27, p. 249	
37	49
BSA 27, p. 250	
38	55
BSA 27, p. 251	
39	54
BSA 27, p. 253	
40	50
BSA 28, p. 70, fig. 13a	
	85
BSA 29, p. 45	
69	34
'Αρχ. 'Εφ. (1919), p. 33	*Cat. no*
2	158
3	94
4	95
6	159
7	160

71	60
72	61
73	62
81	70
82	71
83	72
84	73
94	63
95	64
96	65
97	68
98	69
99	74
BSA 30, p. 242, fig. 1 (minus nos. 5, 11, 20, 21, 22)	*Cat. no* 161-180
5	79
11	80
20	66
21	67
22	81
BSA 30, p. 248, fig. 4	
2	75
4	77
5	181
6	78
BSA 30, p. 249, fig. 5	
14	82
17	83
BSA 30, p. 251, fig. 6	
21	84
BSA 30, p. 215 (no illustration)	
2	76

Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, vol. 65, no. 3, p. 3. *Cat. no.* 101